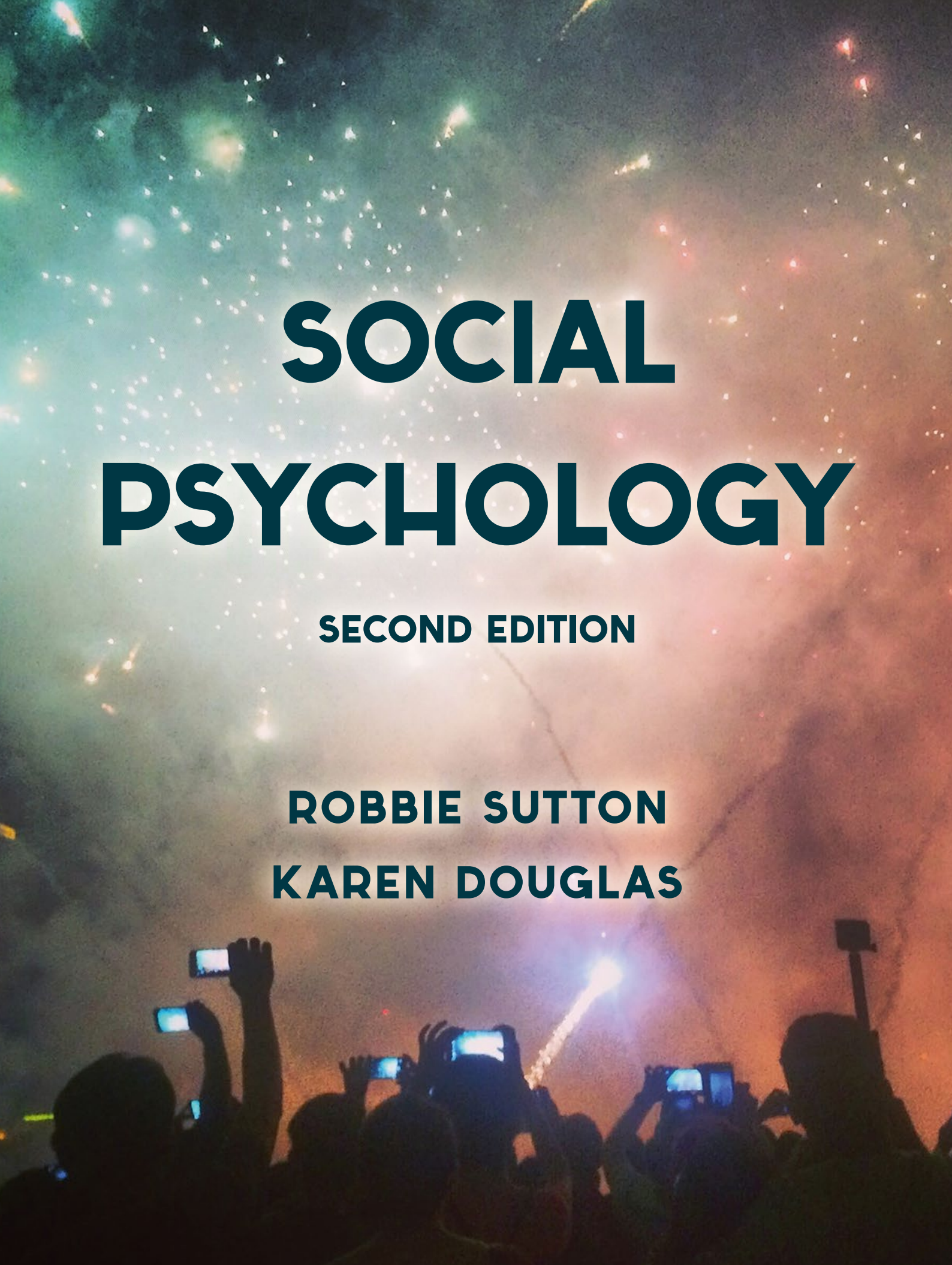

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

SECOND EDITION

ROBBIE SUTTON

KAREN DOUGLAS

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

SECOND EDITION

ROBBIE SUTTON
AND KAREN DOUGLAS

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HIGHER EDUCATION

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To Jamie and Rose

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Robbie Sutton was born in Wellington, New Zealand and completed undergraduate degrees in English, philosophy and psychology at Victoria University of Wellington, and went on to study for his PhD there. He has had teaching positions at Massey University (NZ), Keele University (UK) and now the University of Kent, where he is Professor of Social Psychology. He has published extensively on topics such as justice, inequality, gender and sexism, causal explanation, and attitudes to science. He has been Associate Editor for the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* and the *British Journal of Social Psychology*, and has served on the editorial boards of the *European Journal of Social Psychology* and the *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*. With Matthew Hornsey and Karen Douglas, Robbie edited *Feedback: The Communication of Praise, Criticism and Advice*. He is a Fellow of both the Society of Experimental Social Psychology and the Association for Psychological Science.

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PREFACE

We are very excited to present the second edition of our book. In the process of preparing this and the first edition, we have had help from many people, just some of whom are named in our acknowledgements section. We think that we, and this small army of talented and dedicated people, have again come up with the best social psychology textbook. Ever. But, then, we would think that, wouldn't we? As you will read, people are prone to make unduly positive assessments of themselves and their creations (Chapter 2). They are also prone to cognitive dissonance: a mental state that can lead people to overvalue decisions and achievements for which they have made inordinate sacrifices (Chapter 4).

So, it is not for us to assess whether ours really is the best social psychology textbook available. Besides, as teachers, we have found that the textbooks of our 'competitors' often provide excellent introductions to the knowledge that social psychologists have garnered. Several make an effort to discuss how this knowledge can be applied to real-life concerns and, in various ways, encourage a critical evaluation of this knowledge. Nonetheless, we do assert, with perfect seriousness, that our book is unique. We wrote it because we felt that the available textbooks, however excellent, shared one extremely important shortcoming. Namely, they assumed that students are consumers of knowledge. In this model, the students' job is to read, absorb and sometimes critically evaluate the material delivered in the textbook. The problem is that as a student you need to be so much more than this, whether you intend to go on to further academic or professional training in psychology, or embark on a career in another field. Success in so many endeavours depends on being open-minded, creative and persuasive; on being able to find and synthesize information, identify and solve problems, and put solutions to the test. In short, all students should aspire to be producers, as well as consumers, of knowledge. This means they should not be content simply to be taught, but should strive to develop the skills and confidence to teach themselves, and then to communicate their insights to others. This is the unique philosophy that lies behind our book.

Like other textbooks, it sets out to communicate science in a clear and interesting way; something we, as teachers, researchers and consultants have always loved doing. But it also provides you with many opportunities to find and synthesize information for yourself, to solve real-world problems, to experience and design research, and to communicate your ideas. Textbooks in other disciplines (e.g., mathematics, statistics) are routinely interactive, in the sense that they provide exercises for students. However, this remains highly unusual in psychology, and we believe no other social psychology textbook is as interactive as ours. This philosophy underpins several exercises and other features that are unusual in social psychology textbooks. For example, we provide a guide to critical thinking in social psychology. We include exercises that invite you to try out the methods of previous studies and to invent new ones. We provide extensive critical coverage of selected studies that have since been shown to be deeply flawed or which have failed to replicate. We spotlight research projects conducted by students who explain what motivated them to do the study, what they found, what they learned through the process and what they are doing now.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The philosophy behind this book also led us to add a distinctive chapter at its conclusion. Chapter 15 takes an overview of social psychology, summarizing its key points of wisdom. The wisdom of social psychology will help not only in your studies but also in your life beyond university. This chapter then covers the skills that you can (and employers do) expect to gain from your studies. Thus, you can see Chapter 15 as your guide to reflecting on what you have learned and what you might do with your knowledge.

Before you get to Chapter 15, you will have read the introductory chapter, which outlines the history, principles and methods of social psychology. The rest of the chapters are organized in four parts; as you move through them, the focus shifts from the individual to larger social groups. Part 1 (Thinking and feeling) explores how individuals understand, evaluate and navigate through their social world. Part 2 (Relating) considers how people influence and bond with each other. Part 3 (Belonging) examines the formation of social groups and their central importance in our lives. Part 4 (Applying) explores how the concepts, findings and methods of social psychology can be applied to improve relations between groups, reduce aggression and foster cooperation and kindness.

We would also like to highlight the following significant changes that we have made to the second edition of this book, in response to major changes and advances in the discipline:

- Thorough updates to every chapter, including highlights of the most up-to-date research from the discipline
- Coverage of the issue of reproducibility of social psychological research, including the so-called 'replication crisis', open science and multi-lab projects
- The above issue is introduced in the context of a guide to critical thinking in social psychology in Chapter 1, which covers theory and research on what critical thinking is, describes steps that help you become an effective critical thinker, and outlines specific issues in social psychological research on which you might focus and sharpen your critical thinking skills
- An extensive reappraisal of classic studies and theoretical positions on social psychology on topics such as obedience, bystander intervention, and the Stanford Prison Experiment, and classic theoretical perspectives such as the so-called 'fundamental attribution error'
- Up-to-date coverage of the impact of online communication and social media on social psychological phenomena
- More examples of how social psychological theory and research apply to current real-world issues (e.g., fake news, sexism, internet addiction, human-animal relations, intergroup conflict, Brexit, cyberbullying)
- Illustrations of social psychological findings from both 'mainstream' (quantitative) and 'critical' (qualitative) social psychological research.

This concludes our preface to the book. Please also take a look at the guided tour of some of the main features in the book, and the online resources that accompany it, and then you are ready to start reading the chapters and engaging with the ideas, findings and techniques of social psychology.

AUTHORS' ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many individuals without whom this book, and its second edition, would not have been possible. First and foremost, we thank the outstanding team at Red Globe Press (formerly Palgrave) for their belief, guidance and perseverance over the course of the project. In particular, our thanks go to Anna van Boxel, Catherine Travers, Jamie Joseph, Joanna McGarry, Paul Stevens, Jaime Marshall, Amy Grant, Niki Jayatunga, Lauren Zimmerman, Tiiu Sarkujarvi, Luke Block and Lyndsay Aitken. We would not be so proud of this book, and indeed would not have finished the first or second edition, were it not for their talent and drive.

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- Annelie Harvey, Anglia Ruskin University
- Daniel Jolley, Staffordshire University
- Craig McGarty, University of Western Sydney
- Dennis Nigbur, Canterbury Christ Church University
- Nickola Overall, University of Auckland
- Sander van der Linden, University of Cambridge
- Sally Wiggins Young and Eva Hammar Chiriac, Linköping University

Each one of these features is an asset to this book.

Thank you to our friends and colleagues for their support and encouragement. In particular, we thank our PhD supervisors John McClure and Craig McGarty for inspiring us and then training us to become social psychologists.

Thanks to our research students who have been fantastically patient and sympathetic over the years, and whose enthusiasm and energy have been an inspiration.

We also both thank our families for their love, inspiration and encouragement.

YOUR GUIDE TO THE BOOK AND ONLINE RESOURCES

We have included all of these features in the hope that by the time you have finished reading this book, you are familiar with the main methods by which findings and ideas are produced in social psychology, conscious of their applicability to real-world problems, able to critically evaluate them, and prepared not just to read but to do research. The learning features in the book address each of these learning objectives.

FEATURE BOXES

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

These focus on an important ethical or methodological issue relevant to social psychological research.

CRITICAL FOCUS

These encourage you to critically examine well-known and influential findings and concepts in social psychology.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

These ask you to consider the social psychological dimension of real-world issues, such as anti-smoking campaigns, road rage, homophobia, racism in politics and alcohol-fuelled aggression.

IN-CHAPTER EXERCISES

TIME TO REFLECT

These questions encourage active, critical or creative thinking about the material. This kind of thinking can seem daunting, so the exercises are set up to guide you through the process.

EXPLORING FURTHER

These exercises give you the opportunity to gain practical experience of the studies you are learning about and find out further information about the material. They are designed to help you develop the skills and mindset of a researcher and also to enhance your knowledge and understanding of the material.

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

As students of psychology, you will probably be required to complete a research project in which you collect and analyse your own data. At the end of the book you will find fantastic examples from students who have recently conducted their project on a social psychology topic. Each student explains their research question, why they were interested in answering that question, what methods they used, what their findings were and what they mean. They also tell us what they are doing now and offer some advice based on their experiences. These features are designed to help you prepare for your project with confidence and inspiration. They also highlight how your degree prepares you for a range of different career paths.

END-OF-CHAPTER EXERCISES

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Practice and prepare for assessments using these essay-style questions.

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

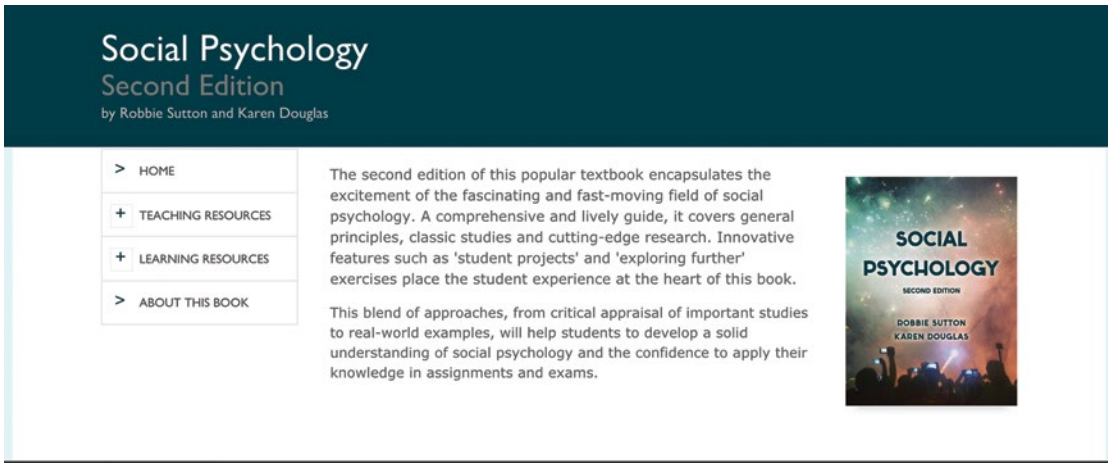
Explore how the findings and ideas you have read about in each chapter can be applied to real-life problems.

FURTHER READING

Take your learning further with carefully selected recommendations for further reading.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Visit www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e to access online resources to support this book.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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
SECOND EDITION
ROBBIE SUTTON
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CHAPTER 1 THE DISCIPLINE OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

This chapter will introduce the discipline of social psychology. It will outline what social psychology is about, provide some information about its history, and focus on the key topics that social psychologists study. It will also provide an introduction to how social psychologists do research, focusing on the research methods and techniques that social psychologists use. By the end of the chapter, you will have a basic knowledge of what social psychology is, and how it is done.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- What is social psychology?
- Where does social psychology come from?
- Doing social psychological research
- The tools of social psychology
- Issues in conducting social psychological research
- Basic and applied research
- Cultural issues
- Research ethics
- Social psychology and other disciplines
- Dissemination of social psychology
- Critical thinking in social psychology

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We will begin this chapter by defining social psychology and explaining how it is done, before guiding you through the many topics that have been studied by social psychologists in the following chapters. As we move through this chapter, we will discuss the origins and history of social psychology, from its emergence at the beginning of the 20th century, through the major influences on the discipline, to the current state of the art. The chapter then focuses on the ways in which social psychological research is done.

WHAT IS SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY?

Scholars in many disciplines such as sociology, linguistics, social anthropology, philosophy and biology have long been interested in how people relate to one other and how they negotiate their way through a complex social world. The discipline of **social psychology** has drawn upon insights and knowledge from these academic subjects – and indeed other branches of psychology, such as cognitive, biological, developmental, organizational, clinical, health and personality psychology – to develop an understanding of how people navigate the complexities of their relationships with others and the social environment in which they live. Social psychology is broadly defined as the branch of psychology dedicated to the study of how people think about, influence and relate to each other.

Social psychology
A branch of psychology dedicated to the study of how people think about, influence and relate to each other.

As we will see throughout this book, social psychology has cast light on many aspects of human thought, feeling, behaviour and relationships. Its insights are applied to help people deal with depression, improve their personal relationships, reduce aggression, conserve natural resources and improve social harmony. Social psychology has informed social debate, raising popular awareness of many of its core concepts. Thus, terms like 'cognitive dissonance' (covered in Chapter 4) and 'prejudice' (covered in Chapters 11 and 12) are familiar to many people. A number of social psychologists have published bestselling books outlining what social psychology has to offer on topics such as how to persuade people (Cialdini, 2008, 2016), how to be happy (Gilbert, 2007; Haidt, 2007), the power of unconscious thought (Bargh, 2017; Wilson, 2002) and the limits of classical economic theory (Ariely, 2011). Other authors have published engaging popular books that draw heavily on social psychology in putting forward arguments about human nature (e.g., Harari, 2014).

The contribution of social psychology has been based on a set of unique strengths. Like other social sciences, it is concerned with issues of wide social importance, including aggression, tyranny, inequality, social harmony and social change. As a branch of psychology, it often uses experiments and related methods to test *causal* explanations of behaviour. As we shall see, causality is difficult to determine without using these methods. For the most part, social psychological experiments are done with individuals or small groups. Thus, rather like physics, social psychology strives to relate the very large and the very small, attempting to explain interactions between complex social and political processes and the intimate details of individual lives and minds. Also, for the most part, these experiments focus on just one or two causal variables at a time. Compared to other social sciences, social psychology has an emphasis on building relatively simple explanations of social phenomena. As we outline in this chapter, experimentation is not the only method that social psychologists rely on (or should rely on), but experiments are more important to social psychologists than to most other social scientists. This means that social psychology has a lot to offer policy makers, who are trying to address the social causes and cumulative effects of individual decision-making in domains such as crime, taxation and health.

Replication
Repeating a scientific study to check whether its results can be obtained again.

Direct/exact replication
Replication in which a study is repeated as exactly as possible.

Conceptual replication
Replication in which some change is introduced to the method of the original study.

Interaction effect
Different causes may interact with each other to produce changes in a dependent variable (e.g., contact between groups and equality of status between groups interact to predict reductions in prejudice).

Moderation
When the effect of one variable (e.g., contact between groups) on an outcome (e.g., prejudice) is changed by a third variable (e.g., whether groups are equal in status). Moderation is apparent when an interaction effect is observed.

Mediation
When the effect of one variable (e.g., contact between groups) on an outcome (e.g., prejudice) works through an intermediate variable (e.g., anxiety about interactions with the other group).

Let us consider an example. We know that people who are in regular contact with members of different racial or religious groups tend to have fewer negative feelings towards such groups: that is, higher levels of *contact* are associated with lower levels of *prejudice* (see Chapter 12). However, this knowledge, by itself, is not enough to answer the chicken-and-egg question: do higher levels of contact *result from*, or are they *caused by*, lower levels of prejudice? And therefore, should those who want to reduce prejudice, such as schoolteachers, company managers or government agencies, engineer contact between members of different social groups? Or would this be useless, or worse than useless, and actually backfire? If increased contact is caused by low levels of prejudice rather than the other way around, forcing prejudiced people into contact with other groups may achieve nothing, except making the situation worse.

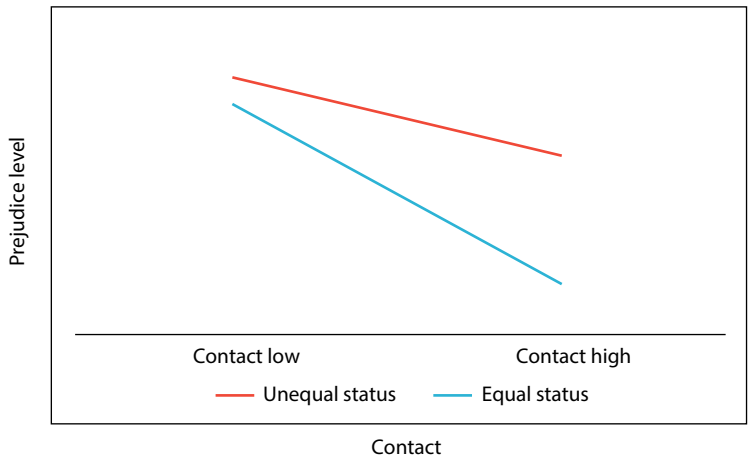
To find reliable answers to these questions, it is necessary to experimentally manipulate contact in a controlled way. If we find that participants who are exposed to contact subsequently show lower levels of prejudice than similar participants who are not, then we can begin to have confidence that there may be a causal relationship between the two factors. Maybe contact *does* reduce prejudice.

Running just one experiment is never enough, however, since human behaviour is so variable, and the measurement of human behaviour is so difficult, that apparently significant differences can emerge by chance. In other words, the results of any one study might be a fluke. They might also be a product of exactly how the experiment was conducted, such that different results would be observed in a different place, or with different methods. **Replication** is therefore a crucial ingredient in any science. Where experimental results are replicated, we can become increasingly confident in our conclusions (or less confident, if results vary). There are two main types of replication: direct replication and conceptual replication. **Direct replications** (also know as **exact replications**) tell us whether the original results can be relied upon in similar situations: for example, the same type of contact between the same groups produces the same changes in prejudice. They are usually attempted to ensure that the results of the original study were not the result of chance or, sometimes, poor research practices. **Conceptual replications** tell us whether the original results generalize to other situations: for example whether different types of contact produces the same results, and whether contact is beneficial between different sorts of groups (let's say, religious vs. racial groups).

Although we have described direct and conceptual replication as two kinds of replication, it may be more accurate to think of replications as falling on a continuum (McGrath, 1981). Strictly exact replications are impossible in social psychology since it is the study of how human psychology interacts with social and historical contexts: time and place (Pettigrew, 2018). By definition, the replication study will recruit different participants and be run at a later date than the original study, and usually it will also happen in a different place, e.g., at a different university, often in a different part of the world (Crandall & Sherman, 2016; Stroebe & Strack, 2014).

Studies in social psychology do more than reveal whether basic causal relationships between two factors, like contact and prejudice, exist. They can also show *when* (under what circumstances) and *how* they exist. For example, as we shall see in Chapter 12, bringing members of different groups into contact works better when members meet as equals, rather than when one group has the upper hand. In social psychology, this is referred to as an **interaction effect** (see Figure 1.1a). That is, the two causes (contact and equality of status) interact with each other to predict levels of prejudice. Put differently, the effects of contact on prejudice depend upon, or are **moderated** by, equality of status. To test this idea, social psychologists might put members of different groups together, and vary whether they meet as equals, or where one group has higher status than the other. Social psychologists can also test for **mediation**, which refers directly to why or *how* a causal relationship works (see Figure 1.1b). For example, experiences of contact might make people less anxious about interacting with the other group, and dispel their fears that members of the other group do not like them. If you feel less anxious about interacting with people, and do not believe

(a) A hypothetical interaction effect



(b) A hypothetical mediation effect

FIGURE 1.1 Two ways that variables can combine to produce effects

(a) Here, the effect of contact on prejudice level is moderated by the equality of status in the contact situation. Contact decreases prejudice, and equality of status also decreases prejudice. However, contact decreases prejudice more strongly when status is equal versus unequal. Another way of looking at the same interaction is that the effect of equality depends on whether contact is low or high. Equality of status has less effect when there is little contact, but has a substantial effect under conditions of greater contact. Both ways of looking at the interaction effect may be legitimate, but normally researchers prefer to be informed by theories that tell them which of the two or more causes is playing an active role, and which cause operates principally by strengthening, weakening, or even reversing the effect of the other. Researchers normally conduct statistical analyses on their results to see whether the 'main effects' of each variable and the 'interaction effect' of the two combined are greater than would be expected by chance alone. Factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a statistical technique commonly used to do this.

(b) Here, as contact increases, anxiety level decreases, and so does prejudice. Thus, we can say that contact decreases prejudice because it decreases anxiety. There may also be a 'direct effect' of contact on prejudice level, but for the sake of simplicity, this is not shown in the diagram. Once again, researchers will run analyses to test whether 'indirect effects', as shown here, are statistically significant, that is, greater than would normally occur by chance alone. It is important to note that mediation and moderation can happen at the same time, that is, both panels (a) and (b) in this figure may capture an element of the truth about prejudice reduction.

they harbour bad feeling towards you, chances are you will feel more positive towards them: we tend to like people who like us (Chapter 7). The logic then is that reductions in anxiety mediate between contact and prejudice towards the other group. Contact reduces anxiety, which in turn reduces prejudice.

As we hope you are beginning to see, social psychology is a challenging but intriguing and rewarding discipline. No two individuals, social encounters or relationships are exactly the same. Any number of forces operate at once to shape social events, including moods, attitudes, values, stress, the weather, religion, culture and so on. To deal with this variety and complexity, a range of sub-topics are studied under the umbrella of social psychology. In this book, we approach the different sub-topics of social psychology as they have been grouped and studied by social psychologists over the history of the discipline. Of course, there is a significant amount of overlap in the way social psychologists study these particular topics. For example, a researcher interested in communication may also focus on relations between and within groups. A researcher interested in attitudes may also focus on social influence and persuasion. The topics are not therefore mutually exclusive, but can nevertheless be organized into general areas that social psychologists have studied in an attempt to understand human social behaviour (see Figure 1.2).

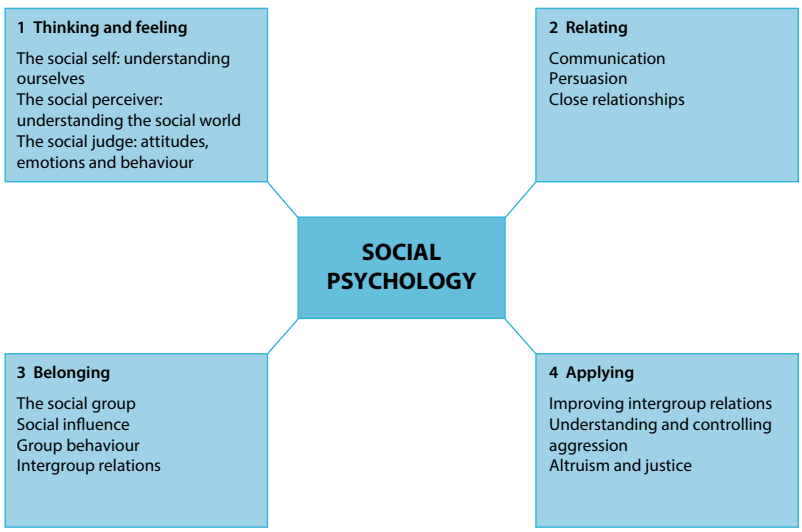


FIGURE 1.2 The different sub-topics of social psychology

Specifically, some social psychologists study processes occurring within the individual, that is, aspects of the self, beliefs and attitudes. The study of these topics is approached in this book as the study of *thinking and feeling* (Part 1), focusing on how people understand themselves and others, and how they judge the social world. Other social psychologists study relationships between others, as presented in the part on *relating* (Part 2), focusing on the study of communication, persuasion and close relationships. Furthermore, some social psychologists study people's belonging to small and larger social groups, studying how groups influence who we are and how they influence our behaviour (Part 3). Others apply basic social psychological knowledge to social issues such as aggression, social harmony and justice, and address societal problems in areas such as business, education and health (Part 4). What ties these sub-disciplines together is the general aim to further knowledge about the relationships between people and the social world. The focus on how people are affected by the actual or implied presence of others (Allport, 1954a) is what makes this branch of psychology *social*.

Scientific discipline A branch of study that involves the gathering of data to test hypotheses that are derived from theories.

Theory A set of principles that aim to explain a phenomenon.

Here, we first focus on social psychology as a **scientific discipline** that uses the scientific method of collecting data, or results, to devise and empirically test **theories** about human nature. Just like the so-called 'hard sciences' such as biology and physics, many social psychologists empirically put theories to the test to make discoveries, draw conclusions and refine theories for future investigations. They test what are thought to be more or less universal laws of human nature. Researchers are typically aware that people from different cultures, or with different personalities and experiences, may behave differently. However, they normally assume that even these differences can be explained by more general principles. The discipline therefore develops through the same processes as other sciences. Of course, we can use the word 'discipline' here with two different meanings. First, social psychology is a discipline, or subject area of study. Second, as a scientific discipline it also requires the rigour that is needed for scientific enquiry. We therefore spend some time towards the end of the chapter focusing on the methods with which the science of social psychology is done.

Critical social psychology An alternative to mainstream (often termed experimental) social psychology arguing that mainstream social psychology is limited by its focus on 'universals' of human nature, which do not exist.

However, not all social psychologists consider the discipline to be a science. Specifically, **critical social psychologists** argue that there are no universal laws when it comes to human nature (e.g., Harré, 1997). Critical social psychologists argue that when contexts change (e.g., time and place), so do social rules and conventions. According to this perspective, it is impossible to explain human behaviour using universal principles because these principles constantly change depending on the context. The term 'critical' is not explicitly meant to imply that mainstream social psychologists are *un*critical. Instead, the term is one that is used in sociology (critical theory) which concerns the examination and critique of society and culture. Towards the end of the chapter, we focus on some of the methods used by critical social psychologists to study key issues in social psychology.

The two 'camps' of social psychology, although both address similar issues and are concerned with the same types of social problems, are often in a 'battle' with each other (e.g., Teo, 2015; Stainton Rogers, 2011). A minority of social psychologists adopt both approaches, but, typically, social psychologists identify themselves as either mainstream or critical social psychologists and, indeed, both feel strongly attached to the epistemological assumptions they make and the methods they use. However, although the two approaches may seem antagonistic and impossible to integrate, it is essential for students of social psychology to understand and appreciate the strengths (and limitations) of both approaches. We explore these throughout the chapter and the book.

WHERE DOES SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY COME FROM?

Although social psychology has drawn on insights from other areas of psychology and other academic disciplines, it is itself a relatively recent discipline. To understand social psychology, some knowledge of its historical context is necessary. This section provides an overview of where social psychology has come from and how it has evolved over the decades. We also present some of the challenges that have faced the discipline over the years.

Early social psychology

The basic questions in social psychology have been the interest of scholars for many centuries. However, it is possible to trace some of the early influences for the discipline of social psychology as we know it today. In the 18th century, British scholars such as David Hume ([1741]1985) and Adam Smith ([1759]2007) wrote about matters related to social psychology. For example, Hume wrote about how people learn to explain events in their lives, by observing what causes tend to correspond with what effects. Hume's writings were, in many respects, the beginning of 'attribution theory', the study of how people explain events, which we will encounter in Chapter 3. Smith wrote about emotions and morality, and their influence on how people trade and exchange goods with each other. His writings have been influential in the social psychological study of emotions (Chapter 4) and justice (Chapter 14). Eighteenth-century German scholars, such as Immanuel Kant, Wilhelm von Humboldt and Johann Friedrich Herbart, and the French scholar Auguste Comte also wrote about issues that are of interest to modern-day social psychologists. Kant wrote about the self and the self-image, Herbart argued that society was a vital aspect of human existence (Chapter 8), Humboldt stressed the relationship between language and thought (Chapter 5), and Comte argued that social processes could be examined using the same methods as those used in the natural sciences (Chapter 1, and throughout this book). Thus, social psychology has its origins in the British, German and French scholars of the 18th century. Indeed, Herbart and Comte are viewed by many as being the 'fathers' of social psychology.

In the late 19th century, a group of German scholars, largely inspired by the writing of Herbart, began to study the concept of the 'collective mind'. In contrast to the 'individual mind', which was the focus of early forms of general psychology, the collective mind referred to the way in which people think about society, but also the way groups form a 'mind' of their own. Specifically, people who belong to the same social group or groups tend to think in the same way, have the same values and observe the same norms. This discipline was referred to as **Völkerpsychologie** (folk psychology or 'psychology of the people') and is also associated with the work of Wilhelm Wundt, who argued that individual and social psychology were distinct phenomena, and that individual consciousness was influenced by social customs and morals.

Völkerpsychologie
Late 19th-century precursor to social psychology. The study of 'the collective mind'.

Volkerpsychologie also had a significant influence on how early theorists viewed the behaviour of groups. As you will see in Chapter 10, when group behaviour is discussed in detail, theorists such as Gustave Le Bon ([1896]1908) and William McDougall (1920) viewed the group as possessing a 'group mind', in which ideas and notions become 'contagious', much like a disease, and spread throughout the group. According to this view, people in large groups can lose a sense of their individuality and often behave in primitive or antisocial ways that they would not even consider when acting alone. As we will see, this perspective led to a rather pessimistic outlook on groups and group behaviour. However, these early ideas helped us to appreciate that in order to understand human behaviour, we need to appreciate individuals as part of collectives and groups (Asch, 1951).

Social psychology began to assert its individuality as a discipline with a series of texts written by various authors (e.g., Baldwin, 1897; Bunge, 1903; McDougall, 1919; Orano, 1901), each exploring a variety of social psychological topics such as emotions, morals and individual character. McDougall (1919) argued strongly for the separation of social psychology from sociology and anthropology, while also arguing that social processes should be studied experimentally. Arguably, however, social psychology was first established as a distinct discipline at the beginning of the 20th century with the publication of Floyd Allport's (1924) *Social Psychology* – an influential book that was subsequently adopted by teachers of psychology for many years. Inspired by the growth of experimental psychology in the USA, Allport argued that social psychology would develop as a discipline if it approached its questions as an experimental science. Others followed this perspective (e.g., Murphy & Murphy, 1931), and this North American approach to social psychology rapidly replaced the German tradition.

Behaviourism Approach based on explaining behaviours in relation to reinforcement.

Early work in social psychology was also strongly influenced by **behaviourism**. In the early 20th century, there was a surge of research, especially animal research, focusing on the impact of positive and negative events on behaviour. Put quite simply, behaviourists argued that behaviour that was followed with a reward would continue, whereas behaviour that was followed by punishment would not. Animals (and people) could therefore be 'trained' to perform desired behaviours as long as they were rewarded for performing them (Figure 1.3). Much research supported this premise, showing that, for example, pigeons could be trained to move around in a circle, or nod if the behaviour was reinforced with a food reward (Skinner, 1938).

The behaviourist approach has been very influential in social psychology. Many social psychologists argue that people are more likely to think, feel and act in ways that are rewarded – or 'reinforced'. They are also more likely to think, feel and act in ways that they see other people being rewarded for. For example, children develop negative attitudes about social groups from observing their parents (Aboud & Doyle, 1996; Castelli, Zogmaister & Tomelleri, 2009; Gibson, Rochat, Tone & Baron, 2017; Hughes et al., 2006). Children who watch TV programmes or play video games in which characters' violence is rewarded become more violent than children who do not (Anderson, 2002; Eron, 1963; Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski & Eron, 2003; see Anderson, Bushman, Donnerstein, Hummer & Warburton, 2015 for a review). Although the behaviourist approach explains a great deal of social behaviour, it has also been criticized for being simplistic. It is difficult to reconcile some more complex social phenomena (e.g., thoughts, attitudes, emotions) with the simplicity of the behaviourist approach. For example, a reward may not necessarily lead to behavioural reinforcement for all the right reasons. A child who is rewarded with treats to practise the cello may play the cello but rather unwillingly. They may be more motivated by the *extrinsic reward* (the treat) rather than the intended *intrinsic reward* of learning to play the cello well. If you are motivated only by extrinsic rewards, there's a good chance you will not enjoy the task as much, or do it as well, as someone who is motivated by intrinsic rewards (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Gestalt psychology Approach proposing that objects are viewed in a holistic sense.

Partly as a consequence of this limitation, **Gestalt psychology** emerged, emphasizing the importance of looking at a whole object and how it appears to people, rather than focusing on specific aspects of the object. The word 'Gestalt' comes from German and means 'shape'. It is

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FIGURE 1.3 Practising the cello for pleasure or reward? Behaviour can be misleading and can be the result of other motivations. For example, promising a child treats in exchange for practising the cello might make them play more but not because of their love of music.

a word used in English to refer to the concept of 'wholeness'. Using the example in Figure 1.4, a Gestalt psychologist would argue that it is impossible to see the Dalmatian by focusing on any of the black or white spaces in the picture, nor can it be identified in parts (e.g., the tail, feet, head). When asked to focus on the picture as a whole, the image of the dog emerges to the perceiver and it appears all at once. It can only be perceived and appreciated as a whole object.

FIGURE 1.4 A Dalmatian emerges as a whole, at once This image demonstrates a principle of Gestalt psychology that the brain is holistic, with self-organizing tendencies.

Source: Gregory (1970)

How is this relevant to social psychology? Gestalt psychologists argued that perception was important in determining attitudes and behaviours. In particular, Kurt Lewin created a framework called **force field analysis** (Lewin, 1943) that expressed human dynamics in the form of a map (see Figure 1.5). The map consists of a person's needs, desires and goals, and arrows indicate the directions and strengths of these forces. All these social forces operated as a Gestalt. Lewin's theory inspired the work of many other social psychologists, such as Muzafer Sherif, Solomon Asch and Leon Festinger, whose work you will read about throughout this book.

Force field analysis Gestalt framework developed by Kurt Lewin to explain human dynamics.

Historical context

It is also important to consider the historical context surrounding the development of social psychology. Earlier, we mentioned William McDougall (1919), whose arguments were largely influenced by Darwinian evolutionary theory – a perspective that was a dominant theme in anthropological and sociological research at the time. However, his arguments about human nature based on evolutionary theory were often ideologically driven and supremacist. Specifically, his social scientific explanations, and others at the time, were motivated by the desire to explain

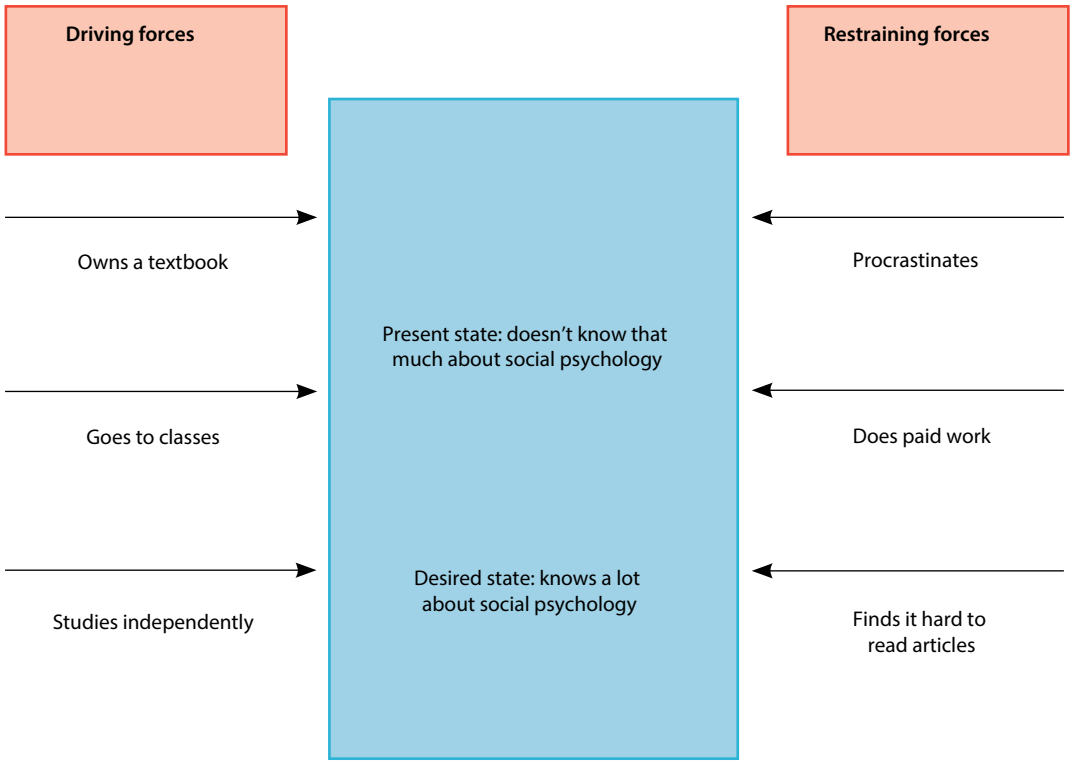


FIGURE 1.5 An example of a Lewinian 'force field' Lewin argued that behaviour is kept in a kind of equilibrium, being held in place by forces that drive change and forces that restrain change. If the number and length of the lines is roughly equal, change is unlikely. If you want to achieve change, you can increase the driving forces (e.g., by attending more classes, or doing more independent reading and exercises), or you can decrease the restraining forces (e.g., by procrastinating less, or taking on less paid work, if possible).

the differences between 'civilized' or evolved (that is, Western) people and 'uncivilized' or not yet evolved (that is, non-Western) people (Baumgardner, 1977).

The social backgrounds of the scholars themselves have also strongly influenced the development of social psychology. For example, we spoke earlier about Kurt Lewin's contributions to the influence of Gestalt principles on social psychology. Lewin was born into a Jewish family in Poland and served in the German army during the First World War. Forced to leave Germany in response to Hitler's Nazism, his subsequent research focused on the social problems and other factors that contribute to stereotyping and prejudice. Similarly, the research of Muzafer Sherif into group processes and group conflict (see Chapter 9) was surely influenced by his own experience of Nazi persecution.

The atrocities of Nazi Germany have had a significant influence on social psychology. Much of the theory and research in social psychology has been inspired by the Holocaust. For example, the early work on social influence and conformity (see Chapter 9) was largely a result of researchers wanting to explain why people so readily complied with the requests of their superiors, and what processes could possibly explain the atrocities that occurred. Also, the study and theories of social loafing and bystander intervention (see Chapters 10 and 14) have been informed by the events of the Holocaust. For example, how do we explain why people sometimes idly stand by and let bad things happen? This impact can also be seen in the range of topics that social psychologists study – many of which involve the study of 'evil' or antisocial behaviours, such as aggression and discrimination. More recently, however, social psychologists have started to focus on positive social behaviours such as charity work and volunteering. Indeed, a branch of psychology has developed in recent years – **positive social psychology** – which focuses on the positive aspects of human nature, such as what makes people happy, what

Positive social psychology Branch of social psychology that focuses on what makes people happy and what contributes to life satisfaction.

factors contribute to life satisfaction, and the study of people qualities (e.g., Seligman, 2002, 2019; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005; see also Lomas, 2016).

Social psychologists continue to be influenced by real-world social problems and social events. For example, many social psychologists study the impact of modern media and technology on social interaction (e.g., Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Joinson, McKenna, Postmes & Reips, 2007; Waytz & Gray, 2018; Whitty & Young, 2016). Social interaction within the workplace is also an important area of research (e.g., Haslam, Postmes & Ellemers, 2003; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Steffens, Haslam, Schuh, Jetten & von Dick, 2017), as are the social psychological factors that influence health behaviours such as the decision to quit smoking (e.g., Fishbein, 1982; Scholz, Staler, Ochsner, Rackow, Hornung & Knoll, 2016; Stroebe, 2000), and the social factors that predict general wellbeing (Haslam, McMahon, Cruwys, Haslam, Jetten & Steffens, 2018). Some social psychologists study the topical issues of rioting and hooliganism (e.g., Cronin & Reicher, 2009; Stott, Adang, Livingstone & Schreiber, 2007; Stott, Ball, Drury, Neville, Reicher, Boardman & Choudhury, 2018). In short, social psychologists 'move with the times' and study important social problems as they emerge. In Chapter 15, we go into depth on some of the ways in which social psychologists address social problems.

TIME TO REFLECT

We have talked about how social psychology has been inspired by events such as the Holocaust. From what you know about social psychology so far, can you think of two other examples of societal issues, events or problems that might be investigated by a social psychologist?

DOING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The need for empirical investigation

Much of social psychology focuses on real-world questions and issues. For example, we want to understand the origins of prejudice and discrimination. We want to know why some people are shy at parties and others are more outgoing. We want to understand how to form better friendships and relationships. We want to know how to persuade someone to go out on a date. The list goes on. Because many social psychological questions lie at the heart of human nature, people have often already formulated some of the answers for themselves. However, with this 'lay understanding' of social psychology comes a problem – many social psychological findings are seen as 'common sense'.

Much of this perception stems from what is known as **hindsight bias**, or the **'I knew it all along' effect**. This refers to the tendency for people to see a given outcome as inevitable once the actual outcome is known (Bernstein et al., 2011; Blank, Musch & Pohl, 2008; Bradfield & Wells, 2005; Fischhoff, Gonzalez, Lerner & Small, 2005). It is particularly relevant to social psychology because much of the research in social psychology deals with everyday, ordinary aspects of human thinking and behaviour. Therefore, when a person reads about a social psychological finding in the newspaper, they are likely to see it as something that was obvious, or easy to predict. However, this is, quite simply, a bias. People who are naive to the outcome are significantly less likely to predict it. Some important findings in social psychology may seem obvious in hindsight. We highlight a few examples in the Exploring Further activity below.

Hindsight bias/ the 'I knew it all along' effect
The tendency for people to see an outcome as inevitable once the actual outcome is known.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Here are some common findings in social psychology. Are they obvious, or only in hindsight? You may like to cover the right-hand column and examine the accuracy of your predictions.

Question	Outcome
Is it true, as noted by a common English idiom, that familiarity breeds contempt? Or, do birds of a feather flock together?	In general, we tend to like people with whom we are more familiar. Familiarity is associated with increased liking (Chapter 7).
Does thinking about death make a person feel more helpless, patriotic or selfish?	They are likely to feel more patriotic. Thinking about the inevitability of death makes people think more about the values that are important to them (Chapter 8).
If someone asked you to do a favour for them, would you like them more or less?	If we do a favour for someone, findings suggest that we grow to like them more (Chapter 4).
If someone asked you to write an essay that went against your beliefs, would you feel better about it if you were paid nothing, a little, or a lot?	People tend to feel better about being untrue to their attitudes if they are paid nothing at all, or just a small amount (Chapter 4).

As we mentioned earlier, most people see themselves as lay social psychologists. Indeed, people do have a reasonable intuitive understanding of social behaviour even though they fall foul of the hindsight bias. However, a key difference between laypeople and social psychologists is that social psychologists – that is, mainstream social psychologists – devise theories to answer questions scientifically. They use a wide variety of research methods to test **hypotheses**, or testable predictions, about human social processes.

Hypotheses Predictions that are tested empirically.

Researchers begin by asking a **research question**. For example, social psychologists might ask if powerlessness makes people more likely to believe in conspiracy theories, or if money makes people happy. The research question guides the research that is done. However, a social psychologist typically has an idea what to expect. The use of the **scientific method** involves the formulation of testable hypotheses (that is, what the social psychologists expect) that are based on theories and previous research, and the testing of those hypotheses with the aim of answering the research question. A simple depiction of the scientific method is presented in Figure 1.6.

Research question A question that guides the research that is conducted.

Scientific method A method that involves the formulation of hypotheses, based on theory and research, and the testing of those hypotheses.

A great deal of social psychological work is theory driven, that is, the research question itself derives from a set of assumptions and propositions that organize the findings of previous research. For example, we will talk at length in later chapters about research that has been derived from theories such as social identity theory, system justification theory and social dominance theory. Theories are often modified as a result of the findings of empirical research. For example, if hypotheses are not supported, this means that the theory is also not supported. Either the theory is incorrect (and needs to be revised) or a new investigation needs to be conducted that takes care of some potential flaws in the original investigation. Sometimes, when a study suffers some methodological flaws, these can influence the results and the study may not be a fair test of the hypotheses. Either way, research methods and theories are often modified as a result of empirical findings.

It must be noted, however, that a theory can never be 'proven' to be true. If a theory is supported by empirical findings, its predictive value is strengthened, but it can never completely

be shown to be true, or be the one and only explanation for the phenomenon of interest. Instead, it can be said *not to be false*. As Popper (1959) argued, scientific theories cannot be proven beyond doubt but they should nevertheless be *falsifiable*. It must therefore be possible to set up empirical investigations that disprove the theory. A theory can be seen as a plausible explanation of a phenomenon if researchers have failed to disprove it. As you read through this book, you will be able to identify many social psychological theories. As you encounter these theories, perhaps you can take some time to think about ways in which they might be falsified.

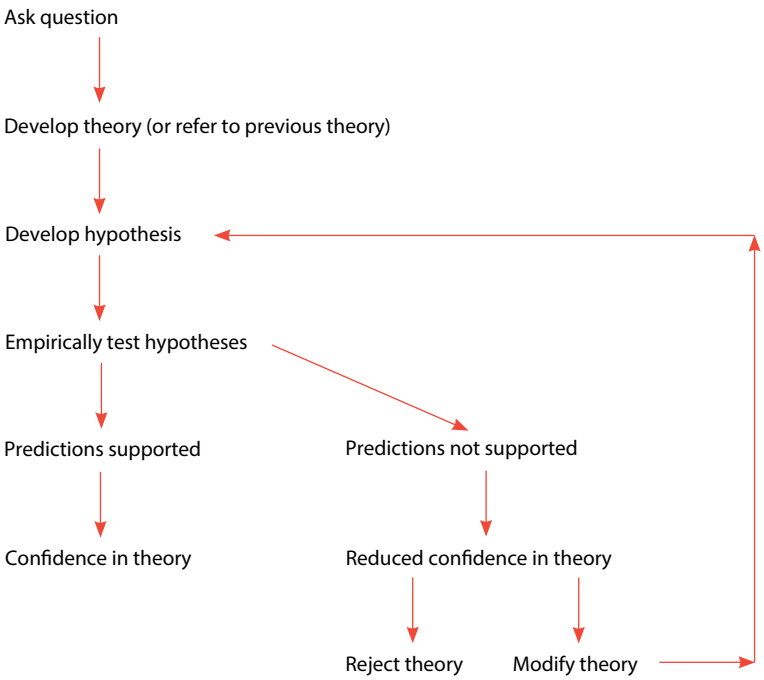


FIGURE 1.6 The scientific method This comprises asking questions, devising theories, testing hypotheses and drawing conclusions.

On the other hand, some research is only loosely based on theory and is instead driven by a particular social phenomenon or social event. For example, we mentioned earlier a research question involving the connection between powerlessness and beliefs in conspiracy theories. This type of research question is more driven by the motivation to explain a phenomenon (conspiracy beliefs) than applying a particular theoretical perspective. Or, a social psychologist may want to explain why the people of the USA almost universally rejoiced in the death of Osama bin Laden in May 2011, but responses in some parts of the world were quite different. Why are people's perceptions of terrorism often so dissimilar? Research in social psychology is sometimes driven by a specific event rather than a theory. Of course, theories are crucial to the formulation of specific hypotheses, but the basic research question itself is sometimes driven by curiosity concerning a particular phenomenon.

Once the research question has been proposed and the hypothesis formulated, the social psychologist then needs to decide how to make the research happen. This leads into a discussion of some of the research 'tools' or methods at the disposal of social psychologists.

Critical social psychology

As mentioned earlier, not all social psychologists use the scientific method of hypothesis testing. In the 1960s and 70s, many social psychologists became concerned about the prominence of experimental social psychology focusing on social processes that occur at the level of the individual. European researchers such as Henri Tajfel (1972) and Serge Moscovici (1972) argued that because hypothesis testing tends to focus on rules that can predict individuals' thinking and behaviour, social psychology was becoming less 'social' or, more specifically, less about social issues (see also Pepitone, 1981; Taylor & Brown, 1979). This was viewed as a 'crisis' for social psychology and researchers such as Tajfel and Moscovici conducted research endeavouring to put the 'social' back into 'social psychology'. You will learn more about this crisis later in the Critical Focus box.

This perspective also led to the development of what we now know as critical social psychology, which focuses on the contexts of social behaviour and emphasizes the study

of human behaviour with respect to people's interactions with others. Critical social psychologists often see empirical work in social psychology as driven by a particular agenda, specifically an individualist agenda, and so argue that it is not ideologically neutral. Of course, these are debatable points. Most social psychologists would refuse to accept the criticism that social psychology as an empirical science is asocial. Throughout this textbook you will undoubtedly appreciate the breadth and depth of the investigations conducted by experimental social psychologists in particular. Also, it is a bold statement to criticize a scientist for having an explicit research agenda. Most would argue that empiricism is about discovery, rather than simple confirmation of something we think we already know. However, the scientific method is not the only way of gaining knowledge about social psychology and how the social world is determined, in part, by the interactions of people within it (Teo, 2015; Stainton Rogers, 2011).

Discursive psychology Language is viewed as social action, through which people construct their social world.

Social constructionism Approach emphasizing the way social phenomena develop in social contexts.

Postmodernism An intentional departure from previously dominant approaches of enquiry, emphasizing that apparent realities are only social constructs and are therefore subject to change.

Social representations Socially shared beliefs or widely shared ideas and values associated with our cultures.

A significant minority of social psychologists are critical social psychologists. Many can be further classified as working in the area of **discursive psychology**, which argues that discourse (e.g., talk, written language) is the primary means by which people construct, communicate and interpret social meaning (e.g., Edwards and Potter, 1992; Tileagă & Stokoe, 2015; Wiggins, 2016). Another type of social psychology relates to **social constructionism**, which is informed by **postmodernism** (Nightingale & Crombie, 1999). Social constructionism emphasizes the way that social phenomena develop in social contexts. A social construct is a concept or activity that is a product (construct) of a particular group (Gergen, 1973, 1999; Jameson, 1991; Nicholson, 1990). Critical social psychologists are informed by Marxist theory and feminist theory (e.g., Bardwick., 1971; Burman, 2011), and by some of the influential work by Moscovici (1961) on **social representations**, or the study of shared beliefs and values that are held by a culture or group. This research challenges the assumption that people all share a common view, because they often come from radically different cultures with different shared assumptions. Thus, what we may call mainstream social psychologists and critical social psychologists have quite different origins. One thing they do agree on, however, is that the social world is both an antecedent and consequence of the individuals and groups within it.

TIME TO REFLECT

In the conflict between discursive or critical social psychology and its 'mainstream' counterpart, do you see echoes of the early division between German 'folk psychology' and American experimental social psychology?

CRITICAL FOCUS

The 1970s 'crisis' in social psychology

With the development of cognitive psychology in the 1950s and the shift away from behaviourism, the so-called 'cognitive revolution' took place. This brought a new set of research tools and empirical methods to the discipline of social psychology. Methods used by cognitive psychologists to study perception and memory became useful to social psychologists interested in many topics such as emotions, attitudes and stereotyping, allowing easy measurement of social psychological processes with individuals in the laboratory.

This led to the development of the new sub-field of social cognition in the 1970s and 80s, which rapidly became

prominent within the field (Taylor, 1998). This development switched the focus of social psychology away from 'macro'-level investigations of social issues to 'micro'-level investigations of social phenomena as they occur at the level of the individual. For some social psychologists, this was seen as an important development that signalled the emergence of social psychology as a scientific discipline. Some argued that the discipline flourished, moving towards an integrated theoretical understanding of cognitive and social processes, and advanced applications of social psychological theory to important societal problems. Reliable and replicable findings in social psychology were an indicator that the discipline had come of age (e.g., Devine, Hamilton & Ostrom, 1994; Fiske & Taylor, 2008).

However, for some social psychologists, this emphasis on cognitive processes came at an unfortunate cost. Specifically, it was argued that as a consequence of using cognitive methods and analysing individuals, social psychology had become less 'social' (Ross, Lepper & Ward, 2010). In focusing on social processes as they occur within the individual, it was argued that the discipline had lost sight of the socially important issues that it was originally developed to address. It reduced complex social phenomena to something much less meaningful (e.g., what does a click of a button really tell us about prejudice?).

Many prominent European and American social psychologists have criticized social psychology for addressing issues of social importance with investigations at the level of the individual. For example, Tajfel (1972) emphasized the importance of the social group in social psychology, arguing for a more collectivist approach than the individualistic approach of contemporary North American social psychology. Other theorists, such as Bruner (1990) and Moscovici (1972), emphasized the importance of culture, arguing that culture is both the 'tool and constraint of action and thought, the meeting point of the social and the individual' (Liverta-Sempio & Marchetti, 1997, p. 6).

Also, Gergen (1989) argued that reducing real-world phenomena to cognitive representations of the world means that social events 'cease to exist for the discipline as legitimate foci of concern' (p. 463). Finally, in his history of social psychology, Allport (1954a) criticized experimental social psychology for its triviality and lack of generalizability. He argued that most studies in experimental social psychology are 'snippets of empiricism, but nothing more' (p. 68). Further, Allport wondered if the objective scientific methods chosen by experimental social psychologists can tell us very much at all about practical problems and social concerns. The new emphasis on the study of social phenomena at the level of the individual seemed to go against Kurt Lewin's attempt to make the discipline socially useful.

Argument about the 'crisis' in social psychology continues to this day. In particular, many critical social psychologists argue that the crisis continues and that mainstream experimental social psychology still does not take the word 'social' seriously enough (Pancer, 1997). Alternative approaches, such as discursive psychology (e.g., Potter & Wetherell, 1987), ethogenics (Harré, 1979) and humanistic psychology (e.g., Shotter, 1984), attempt to understand people as constructions or products of their history, culture and environment. According to this standpoint, all behaviour should be understood within a social context, paying attention to historical, cultural, socioeconomic and political factors. It is argued that investigations at the level of the individual often fail to take such factors into account.

Questions

1. Think critically about the 'crisis' in social psychology, perhaps drawing up a table of the pros and cons of experimentation. What can we learn from experimentation and what can we not learn? Are there some issues in social psychology that are simply not suited to experimentation?
2. Think about the role of culture in social psychology. To what degree does culture hinder the arguably reductionist approach to social phenomena taken by experimental social psychologists?
3. Some alternatives to experimentation argue for more 'deconstructionist' approaches to the study of social psychology, analysing individuals' complex psychological responses in the form of text. Arguably, such analyses are subjective. What are the advantages and disadvantages of subjectivity in social psychological investigations?

THE TOOLS OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Once a research question has been proposed and a hypothesis has been formulated, a social psychologist needs to work out the best way to make the research happen. For most social psychologists, this means designing a study to put the hypothesis to the test. This is no small feat. There are many decisions that need to be made, first of which is the type of **methodology** that will best enable the social psychologist to test their hypothesis. A research methodology

Methodology Research methods and their underlying assumptions.

refers to the general approach taken to provide evidence for a research question. These can generally be seen as either **qualitative** or **quantitative methodologies**.

Qualitative methodology Research approach based on interpretations of data generally obtained by observation, use of archives or interviews. Data are typically verbal (e.g., spoken or written words), but interpretations of pictures, movement and other behaviours may feature.

Qualitative research methods generally involve the collection of information in naturalistic settings. For example, a researcher may observe natural behaviour or language. They assign meaning to what they observe and interpret the behaviours and language in relation to their inherent meaning. On the other hand, quantitative methods involve the collection of numerical **data** – information, quantifiable observations, measurements or responses – for scientific analysis and interpretation. Typically, quantitative social psychologists attempt to control features of the empirical setting in order to directly test the factor of interest.

Quantitative methodology Research approach based on the systematic measurement of events or phenomena and the statistical analysis of data.

Data Information, observations, measurements or responses that are collected, scientifically analysed and interpreted.

The choice of whether to use quantitative or qualitative methodology depends largely on the research question being asked. For example, if a researcher wishes to conduct an in-depth examination of a particular social phenomenon, they may be more likely to opt for qualitative methods. If, on the other hand, they are interested in the effect of a discrete event on a particular phenomenon, they may want to measure the factor and therefore conduct a quantitative investigation. The choice of research methodology can also be driven by epistemological assumptions. As we discussed earlier, critical social psychologists do not necessarily believe that there are 'universals' of human nature, so quantitative investigations that attempt to generalize principles across humans are not seen as appropriate. Critical social psychologists, therefore, almost exclusively utilize qualitative methods. Other researchers, however, believe that qualitative methods do not allow researchers to draw conclusions about human nature. If this is viewed as a key goal of social psychology to a researcher, then they will not opt for qualitative methods. On the other hand, there are many social psychologists who use a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

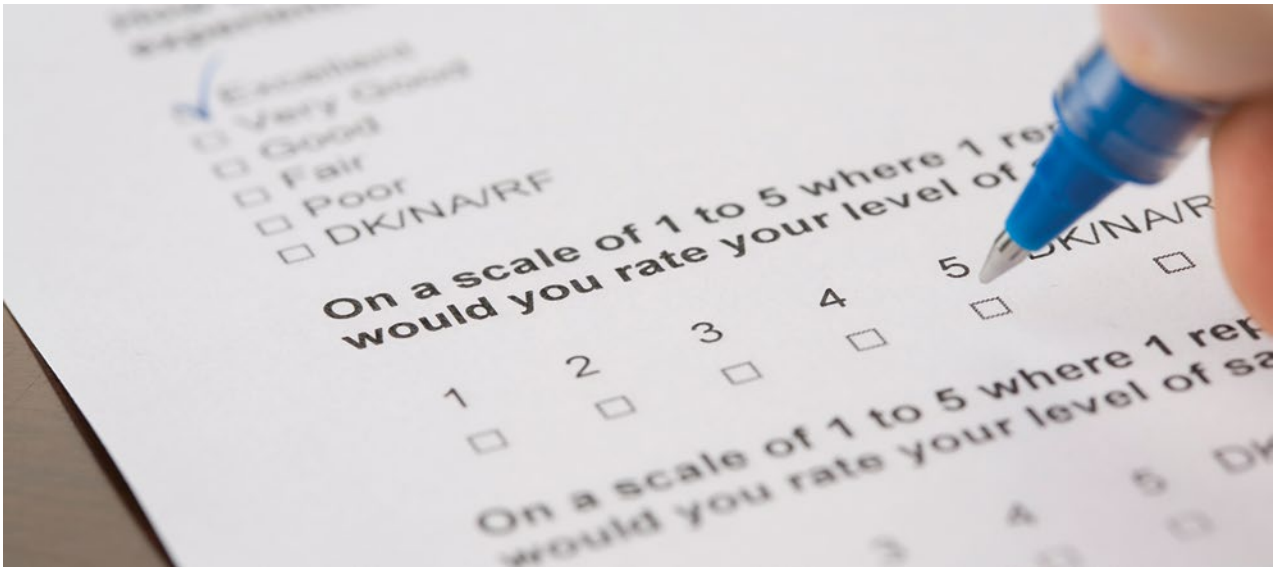
Quantitative methods

Surveys and questionnaires

Surveys and questionnaires are among the most common research methods used in social psychology. These tools involve simply asking people a series of questions that the researcher has carefully designed and put together to address a specific research question or questions. In surveys, participants are often asked a series of questions in the form of an *interview* in which the investigator records the participants' answers. Alternatively, the survey can be conducted in the form of a *questionnaire,* where the participants record their own responses. A survey or questionnaire can ask for open-ended responses, that is, participants are asked to give their responses freely, in their own words. Responses may then be analysed using qualitative analytical techniques (see later in this chapter), or the researcher may code for specific predetermined responses and analyse the data quantitatively.

On the other hand, some questionnaires ask participants for numerical responses. The researcher carefully chooses the questions asked of the participants in order to test hypotheses. Participants are asked to record their responses to items on what is often referred to as a Likert-type scale, where participants respond with a number indicating their level of agreement or disagreement with a statement. These survey responses are averaged to obtain numerical scores for each participant on the variables of interest. In survey and questionnaire terminology, the relationship between one 'variable' (the predictor variable) on another (the criterion variable) is examined.

Surveys and questionnaires are a reasonably straightforward way to tap into people's attitudes, values and beliefs and this is one reason for their popularity. Also, they allow researchers to collect a large amount of data, so for the social psychologist interested in making broad



Getty Images/kasayizgi

FIGURE 1.7 Survey questionnaires Surveys and questionnaires ask people to answer questions that have been designed to address social psychological research questions.

conclusions about human nature, they are able to generalize their findings to the broader population. However, surveys and questionnaires are not without their disadvantages. In particular, the investigator chooses the questions to ask in the first place. Question choice may be subject to bias, in that the experimenter chooses a set of questions favouring a particular approach when others may have been fairer. When responses are not anonymous, participants may be reluctant to answer questions honestly and their responses may be subject to **demand characteristics** – they may respond in the way they think the investigator wants them to respond. Further, as we shall see in several chapters, people are not always conscious of all their attitudes (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), and so are unable to report them in surveys and questionnaires. Also, questionnaires often fall prey to 'response set' – the tendency for people to always respond in the middle of a scale, or to agree to statements without thinking. Sometimes, this can lead to inflated responses (so-called 'ceiling effects') or responses that are too low (so-called 'floor effects'). All these can influence how the results are analysed and interpreted.

Demand characteristics Aspects of a study that participants may interpret as 'demanding' a particular response.

Correlational research Examines the relationships or associations between variables.

The use of surveys and questionnaires also raises the issue of correlation versus causation (see Ethics and Research Methods box), which is addressed by the use of experiments.

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Correlation versus causation

The use of questionnaires raises an important issue in social psychological research – that of *correlation versus causation*. In many areas of research, social psychologists are interested in examining the relationships between variables. Are increased values on one dimension (e.g., sexism) associated with increased values on another (e.g., prescriptive attitudes towards the behaviour of pregnant women, that is, the things that pregnant women should and should not do)? Are religious beliefs associated with happiness?

Correlational research examines the natural association between two or more variables, as in these examples. Such associations differ in their strength: some variables are strongly correlated with each other, whereas others are only weakly associated. Also, some variables are *positively correlated,* that is, as values on one variable

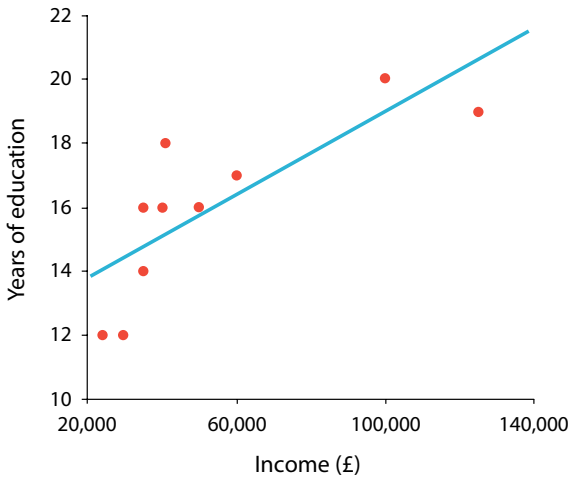
increase, values on another variable also increase (see (a) below). However, some variables are *negatively correlated*, meaning that as values on one variable increase, values on the other decrease (see (b) below). Correlations range in size from –1 (perfect negative correlation), through 0 (no correlation), to 1 (perfect correlation). As a general rule of thumb, a correlation of 0.2 (or –0.2) is a small relationship, a correlation of 0.4 (or –0.4) is a moderate relationship, and a correlation of 0.6 (or –0.6) is considered a strong relationship. The figures below show what correlational relationships might look like in a *scatterplot* – a graph of values of one variable on the x-axis, set against values of the other variable on the y-axis. Each dot on the graph represents one participant's responses on both variables of interest. In short, correlational studies enable researchers to examine how strong the relationships between variables are.

Part (a) of the figure demonstrates a hypothetical strong *positive correlation* between the number of years a person has been educated and their income level. The more years a person studies, the more money they are likely to earn. Part (b) of the figure demonstrates a hypothetical strong negative correlation between the number of hours a student watches TV and their average mark on leaving university (out of 100). The more hours a person watches TV per week, the lower their grades are likely to be.

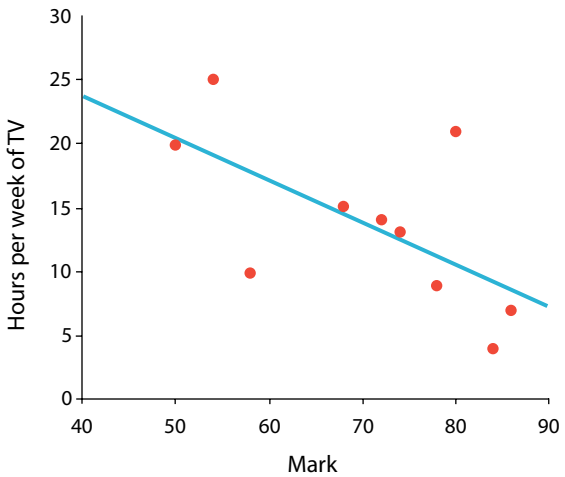
Correlational research does not, however, inform the researcher about *causality*. In other words, a researcher may hypothesize that sexism causes people to be more prescriptive about the behaviours of pregnant women, or that religion causes happiness, but cause cannot be established. It might be that attitudes towards the behaviour of pregnant women predict sexism, or there may be some third factor involved. It might be that religious beliefs increase people's use of social support networks and it is this factor that makes people happier.

Longitudinal research is a type of correlational research that goes some way towards establishing causality. In longitudinal studies, researchers measure the same variables at different points in time on the same group of individuals. For example, a researcher might want to know how identical twins reared apart differ on a range of variables such as intelligence. If the twins are tracked over many years, it can be assumed, because they share the same genetics, that changes in other variables over time are likely to have been caused by upbringing. However, even with a longitudinal design such as this, it is possible that other variables can change over time which may affect the outcome variables of interest. That is, they cannot be sure that changes in variables such as intelligence are purely because of upbringing. The optimal way to determine whether changes in one variable bring about changes in another is to conduct **experimental research** in which levels of one variable are manipulated. We will talk more about this in the section 'Experiments' below.

(a) Positive correlation



(b) Negative correlation



Longitudinal research Involves repeated observations of the same variables over short or long periods of time.

Experimental research Examines the effect of one variable on another variable(s).

Independent variable (IV) In an experiment, the IV is the variable that is manipulated and is hypothesized to cause a specific outcome in the dependent variable.

Dependent variable (DV) In an experiment, the DV is the variable that is measured and is hypothesized to be influenced by the IV.

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Experiments

Survey and questionnaire studies enable social psychologists to answer a wide range of research questions, but, crucially, they do not allow researchers to infer causality (see Ethics and Research Methods box). This is often an important question in social psychology. To be sure about which variable 'causes' which, social psychologists conduct experiments in which they control factors in order to measure the direct effect of one variable on another. In an experiment, the variable that is manipulated is called the **independent variable (IV)**. The IV is hypothesized to be the cause of changes in the **dependent variable (DV)**, which the experimenter measures. The experimenter chooses how to manipulate the IV and the number of IV levels there should be. A **condition** is one level of the IV. For example, in a classic study of aggression (Chapter 13), Bandura, Ross and Ross (1961) had children watch adult models interacting with a doll (the Bobo doll). The experimental manipulation was the aggression displayed by the adult towards the doll. Either the adult showed aggression towards the doll, or interacted with the doll in a non-aggressive way.

In an additional **control condition**, there was no adult model. In this example, there were therefore three levels of the IV: the adult model was aggressive, non-aggressive, or there was no adult model. Bandura et al. measured the aggression levels of the children (the DV), finding that children displayed more aggression after watching the adults behave aggressively towards the Bobo doll compared to the non-aggressive condition or the control condition.

This example shows a good level of experimental control, allowing the researcher to stringently test their hypothesis. That is, by comparing the children's aggression across the three conditions, it is possible to conclude with some certainty the extent to which viewing an aggressive model interact with the doll influenced their levels of aggression. Sometimes, however, complete experimental control is not possible or necessary. For example, social psychologists often want to investigate the effect of naturally occurring variables (e.g., age, gender, marital status) on various outcomes (e.g., life satisfaction). In such experiments, where the IVs of interest occur naturally, the researcher can take advantage of this and measure the DVs of interest. DVs in experiments can also be measured in a variety of ways, such as behaviours, physiological measures, such as heart rate and brain activity, and self-reported attitudes.

One way to conduct an experiment is in a laboratory, which ensures as much experimental control as possible. This does not necessarily mean a laboratory as you may think of it in terms of other sciences such as chemistry and physics. Sometimes, a social psychology laboratory is simply a room with desks, chairs and a computer. It does not have to be anything more

Condition In an experiment, participants are exposed to at least one condition, also known as a 'treatment'. A condition is one level of the IV. In a drug trial, one condition would be the drug, and another condition might be a placebo, in which participants take a tablet that does not contain the active ingredient. In a social psychological experiment, at least one condition contains the stimulus thought to elicit a particular effect, and other conditions contain different levels of that stimulus, or are without it altogether.

Control condition In an experiment, the control group is similar to a condition in which the IV is manipulated, except that the casual factor that is hypothesized to influence the DV is missing.

than a quiet space for participants to complete an experimental task. However, although we have separated questionnaires and experiments in our discussion, many questionnaires are, in fact, experiments. It is possible to manipulate IVs through verbal instructions in a questionnaire, or by presenting participants with a verbal scenario or story. It is also possible to use online questionnaire software to conduct experiments so that participants can complete the experiment remotely rather than in a laboratory. Not all experiments are conducted by stern scientists wearing white lab coats.

There are various pros and cons of taking an experiment into the laboratory. As we have already mentioned, laboratory experiments allow a researcher as much control over the experiment as possible, therefore allowing for a stringent test of a hypothesis. However, one of the drawbacks is that the experiment can become artificial, thereby compromising the similarity between the experiment and the corresponding natural circumstances of interest in everyday life. This is known as the **external validity** (or **mundane realism**) of an experiment. In other words, when an experiment is so tightly controlled in a laboratory, some would argue that it cannot tell us a great deal about human nature in general, which is subject to many complexities that are eliminated in the laboratory.

External validity/ mundane realism The similarity between the situation of the experiment and the situation in which the phenomenon/ phenomena of interest occur in everyday life.

At the same time, this level of control can be looked at another way – in controlling as many factors as possible, an experimenter is able to focus on one or more specific variables of interest. While it may not be natural per se, the researcher is able to speak with some confidence about the influence of the variable(s) that has been manipulated. In particular, an experiment is said to be high in **internal validity** (or **experimental realism**) if the researcher can be confident that it is the manipulated variable that is having the effect (if any) on the dependent variable(s) in the experiment. Poor external validity is not, therefore, always problematic. Sometimes, creating a bare and artificial experimental setting allows researchers to make specific theoretical and practical points, which would be difficult to make with the presence of other 'noise' in the study. If the 'noise' is controlled, and the conditions for participants are different in no way apart from the way determined by the manipulation, then the researcher can be confident that they have fairly put their hypothesis to the test. However, the manipulation must be meaningful and realistic to the participants. For example, understanding the instructions in a manipulation is crucial; otherwise participants' misunderstanding will probably influence the results. For this reason, experimenters often include **manipulation checks** in their studies. Researchers include these so that they can be confident that participants have understood the manipulation and have responded appropriately. The internal validity of the study is therefore acceptable.

Internal validity/ experimental realism The extent to which a researcher can be confident that the variable of interest produced the results.

Manipulation check In an experiment, the researcher takes an additional measure to ensure that the manipulation of an IV has had the desired effect.

For some research questions, however, external validity is crucial. In many cases, **field experiments** are conducted in the 'real world', but participants may not be aware that they are participating in a study. For example, an experimenter might go out to a shopping centre to examine people's reactions to invasions of their personal space. They may manipulate the magnitude of the invasion but the experiment has a more ecologically valid feel to it because the participants do not know they are participating in a study. If the study was conducted in a laboratory, the participants may get wise to the experimenter's motives and the study may not be a valid test of the hypothesis. Thus, field experiments are important and useful.

Field experiment An experiment that is set up in the 'real world'. Participants are typically unaware that they are participating in an experiment.

Both within and outside the laboratory, experiments have advantages over other methods when social psychologists want to make conclusions about human nature. The main reason for this is that through the **random assignment** of participants to conditions (levels of the IV), the experimenter can be confident that participants in the different conditions are similar. So long as you have enough people, and you randomly assign them to one of two groups, you can be confident that the two groups of people will have much the same age, attitudes, gender and any other traits that might affect the results of your study. Thus, you can be confident that if the two groups of people act differently, it is because of the condition they are assigned to – not

Random assignment Participants are allocated randomly to groups to avoid any potential effects of participant characteristics (e.g., age, gender) being overrepresented in one group and influencing the results.

because of some other difference between the two groups of people. Except for the influence of the IV, there should be no other differences across experimental conditions.

It is also important that experiments are designed in such a way that they avoid **confounding**, where variables are too closely related within the experiment and it is difficult to know which one is having an effect. For example, imagine an experiment with two different conditions, but everyone in the first condition was female and all participants in the second condition were male. The experimenter cannot be sure which variable is having an effect on the DV: the manipulation of the IV, or differences due to gender. Experimental conditions must therefore be identical in every way apart from the crucial differences that occur with the manipulation of the IV.

Confounding
When one or more IVs are related to another causal variable, so it is impossible to tell which variable is having an effect.

There are a number of downsides to conducting experiments. For example, experiments are often subject to demand characteristics, as can be the case for surveys and questionnaires. Participants' behaviours and responses may be an artefact of the experimental situation itself rather than a response to the experimental manipulation. For example, participants may infer that the experimenter sees a particular mode of responding as *socially desirable,* and respond accordingly, which may bias the results (Rosenberg, 1969). Similarly, participants may become apprehensive about their responses, which may influence the findings. In both cases, the participants have some knowledge of the hypotheses. It may not be the most accurate knowledge, but it is sufficient enough to have a potential effect on the outcome of the experiment. Thus, it is important for the participants to be as blind to the hypotheses (and research conditions) as possible. Experiments are also subject to *experimenter effects* – effects that occur because the experimenter may inadvertently give the participants 'clues' to the hypotheses. We will see an example of this in Chapter 3, where an experimental procedure designed to make university students walk slower, as if they were older adults, worked only when the experimenters hired to run the study knew about the hypotheses – that is, what was expected to happen (Doyen, Klein, Pichon & Cleeremans, 2012). Of course, this is not generally intentional. The researcher simply has knowledge of the experimental conditions and may unintentionally communicate their expectations to participants, potentially biasing the experiment. Therefore, as far as possible, the experimenter should also be blind to experimental conditions. When both experimenter and participant are blind to conditions, this is known as the **double-blind procedure**.

Double-blind procedure
Procedure in which neither experimenter nor participant has knowledge of the experimental conditions.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Identify the dependent and independent variable(s) in the following examples:

1. **An experiment designed to examine the influence of imagined contact with a group on attitudes towards the group.**
2. **An experiment investigating how advertisement effectiveness is influenced by advertisement length and mode of presentation.**
3. **An experiment where people judge the attractiveness of faces of different ages and genders.**

Techniques that can be quantitative or qualitative

Observations

Some research questions can be answered by merely observing what people do. Much of social psychologists' research is informed by observations from which they learn about a particular phenomenon, make hypotheses and then conduct further research. However, observations are often used as a research tool without the use of other methods. For example,

Participant observation Research technique in which researchers observe natural behaviour without intervening. It is often referred to as the field study method.

Field study A type of observational study where the researcher goes into the field to observe naturalistic behaviour.

social psychologists sometimes use the technique of **participant observation** where they 'get close' to people and observe what they do. This type of research is similar to that conducted by anthropologists, who often study groups (e.g., religious, cultural and occupational groups) and societies by living and interacting with them for an extended period of time and directly observing their behaviour. For example, you may be familiar with the influential work of anthropologist Margaret Mead, who spent a great deal of time in South Pacific and Southeast Asian cultures studying attitudes towards sex and coming of age. Using this technique, the researcher typically observes natural behaviour and does not intervene; staying neutral and non-intrusive so as not to influence what is being observed. The technique of observation is sometimes called the **field study** method.

This method can also include the researcher conducting interviews (see Figure 1.8), discussions, reviewing life histories and reviewing personal documents. Sometimes, observations are purely qualitative, from which researchers draw out themes of observations and interactions, but sometimes observational studies can involve the collection of quantitative data. As mentioned earlier, in social psychology observations are typically used as a tool to generate and develop hypotheses. Unlike anthropologists, for whom observations are a primary research method, social psychologists typically use observations more informally with the view to using the information gathered to develop other investigations to test hypotheses. There are good reasons for this. Although observations provide a rich set of information, what an investigator observes is, again, their choice and potentially subject to bias due to a lack of objectivity. If a researcher's goal is to describe human social psychological processes in general, it is difficult to do so based on observations of a small group of people. The observer may also accidentally interact with the people who they are observing, which can also bias the findings.

Case studies

Case studies allow a researcher to analyse a specific event, individual or group, in-depth. They involve a range of the tools we have discussed already, such as observations, surveys, interviews and questionnaires. As such, they have quantitative and qualitative aspects. The advantage of

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FIGURE 1.8 Interviews These are used in several different types of social psychological research, including surveys, discourse analysis and case studies.

conducting case studies is that they allow for a detailed examination of the subject of interest. They are often used to examine phenomena that would be difficult to control in the laboratory, such as cults, criminal behaviour and people's responses to tragedies.

Archival studies

Archival studies involve going back to the 'archives' (as the name suggests) and examining evidence for a hypothesis among existing data. Archives can be many things, such as newspaper reports, political speeches, statistical records and court proceedings, which already exist and can be gathered over a long period of time. Of course, the original information was collected without the hypothesis in mind , so it cannot be biased in terms of how the information was collected. Information can be gathered relatively easily too, but the investigator needs to know what they are looking for, and how to look for it, in order to conduct archival research. Archival research is a rather underutilized tool in social psychology but it can tell us many things. To give one example, Mullen (1986) conducted an archival investigation of 60 newspaper reports of lynching events during the 1800s. Mullen coded the reports for information regarding group composition (number of victims and number of lynchers) and the atrocities performed (occurrence of hangings, shootings, burnings and other atrocities). Results suggested that as the size of the lynch mob relative to the number of victims increased, the mob became more aggressive and performed more atrocities.

Archival research such as this has the advantage of being able to inform social psychologists of social psychological phenomena as they have occurred in the past, and as they occur or change over a period of time. However, archival methods often involve laborious data collection. The researcher is also limited by the amount, and nature, of the information collected originally and may require vital information that is missing. Archival investigations are, therefore, sometimes unreliable. They are also able to answer a smaller range of research questions and so are used primarily to complement the other methods of social psychology.

Qualitative methods

Thematic analysis

As the name suggests, thematic analysis identifies themes in a set of data, usually derived from an interview. The analysis consists of two phases. First, the researcher identifies, analyses and describes patterns or themes within the data and, second, the researcher uses the themes to make further interpretations. This is a complex process of identifying initial themes and then revising and extending the list of themes several times before concluding the analysis and producing a report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2018; Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017). This is one of the most common qualitative methods used in social psychology.

Conversational analysis

Conversational analysis focuses closely on conversational interactions, producing a detailed analysis, classification and notification of the talk. The aim is to examine what people are doing with the language they use, as well as what they are hoping to achieve. Conversational analysis not only analyses the content of what people are saying, it also analyses how people conduct the conversation, such as how they take turns and use pauses, interruptions and so on. It is designed to give a detailed analysis of how people use language and tailor their talk for specific situations. Typically, conversational analysis uses naturally occurring conversation such as interactions between doctors and patients (Chan, Wong, Ching & Lam, 2016; West, 1984) and in police interrogations (e.g., Stokoe, 2010). Typically, a researcher devises a research

question or problem and then collects data via video or audio recorded conversations. The researcher does not intervene in the data collection to ensure that the analysis examines natural talk in interactions. Once the data have been collected, a researcher transcribes the conversation and, based on an inductive data-driven analysis, examines patterns in the conversation. Thus, rather than an experiment or observational study where hypotheses are formulated prior to the study taking place, the outcomes and conclusions drawn from conversational analysis are driven by the data itself.

Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis focuses on how people understand the world through the stories they tell to others (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2015). It is based on the idea that telling stories helps people to make meaning out of complex and often chaotic situations (Gergen & Gergen, 1984). Typically, a researcher conducting a narrative analysis will identify some research question or problem and identify the events or situations that will enable them to answer that question. The narratives then need to be collected. The researcher identifies who they want to hear stories from, designs an interview and then conducts the interview. Afterwards, the researcher transcribes the interview and interprets it (Parker, 2005).

Discourse analysis

Advocates of discourse analysis in social psychology argue that language is the means by which people create their social world and that 'text' and 'talk' ought to be the principal focus of social psychology. For example, Potter (1996) has argued that language constructs social and psychological life, rather than being simply a way for researchers to study how people see the world. Discourse analysis therefore studies language – language obtained from conversations, interviews and text (e.g., newspapers). The text is analysed and interpreted within the context in which it was produced. The researcher can then draw conclusions about what the person is communicating about their thoughts, feelings and experiences (e.g., Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; see Riley & Wiggins, 2019 for an overview).

Discourse analysts have developed discourse-based alternatives to the study of many mainstream topics in social psychology. For example, memory and causal attribution have been examined through everyday event reporting (Edwards & Potter, 1992, 1993; Middleton & Edwards, 1990). The role of emotions in relationships and actions has been studied through how people call upon emotional states in their personal narratives, such as disputes, and in counselling situations (Edwards, 1997, 1999). Discourse analysis has also been used extensively in the study of prejudice (e.g., Augoustinos & Potter, 2017; Condor, 1988; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; van Dijk, 1993) and crowds, collective action and protest (Canning, 2018; Drury & Reicher, 2005; Reicher, 2001, 2004). In general, discourse analysts argue that by examining an entire discourse, it is possible to see people doing the kinds of things for which psychology has a set of explanations and definitions (Edwards, 2005). This is the main point of departure between discourse analysis and mainstream social psychology. While mainstream social psychologists argue that the unit of analysis can be the individual, the group or a specific cognition (e.g., attitude or emotion), discourse analysts argue that the basic unit of analysis should be the talk. The cognitions and psychological constructs that social psychologists investigate are assumed by some discourse analysts to exist only through talk (e.g., Edwards, 1997; Potter, 1996; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This view poses problems for mainstream social psychology, which is one reason why the discourse analytic approach is often critiqued, and the two approaches are often perceived to be at odds with one another (Giles & Coupland, 1991). Perhaps more optimistically, mainstream and discourse analytic approaches may be able to inform each other to gain a clearer understanding of how social psychological processes occur and are brought about through communication.

There are two main types of discourse analysis. The first, *micro-discourse analysis,* examines text and talk in fine detail with the aim of understanding what is occurring in particular interactions (e.g., how women deal with sexism). This analysis focuses on the features of the language use, discourse, verbal interaction and communication, and considers the text's syntax, structure and rhetorical devices. From this, researchers can generalize about the discursive practices that people use in specific situations. *Macro-discourse analysis,* on the other hand, aims to identify different discourses that occur surrounding a particular event or topic. It is concerned with understanding the broad, societal currents that influence the text being studied. At the middle level, *meso-discourse analysis* attempts to bridge the gap between the smaller details and the societal influences on the text.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is based on the principle of phenomenology. This philosophy emphasizes the relationship between the world inside the mind and the greater world outside. It considers how people's conscious experience of existing within the world is made up of their feelings, relationships and experiences (e.g., Smith, 2011; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This technique consists of extracting people's descriptions of concrete experiences, or narratives about these experiences. IPA uses data obtained from methods such as interviews, and sometimes from other forms of text such as letters. In analysing the data, the researcher attempts to identify themes within the text and specifically looks for recurring themes. These themes are then organized into a hierarchy to establish if participants' responses suggest that some themes are more important than others. IPA enables researchers to compare the data from one participant with that of others to establish if there are themes and experiences that are common across people. For example, Rhodes and Smith (2010) gave an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the experience of depression using a case study of one man who had been diagnosed with depression. Interviews with the man were analysed using IPA, enabling the researchers to describe the origins of the illness and the complex effects that followed. A good round-up of qualitative methods used in psychology, including IPA, can be found in Willing and Stainton Rogers (2017).

ISSUES IN CONDUCTING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

We have already discussed some of the issues that occur when conducting social psychological research. For example, experimental social psychologists are often confronted with the dilemma between making their research externally valid, that is, meaningful to something in the 'outside world', and controlling aspects of the context which are not of interest, thereby making the experiment more rigorous but less ecologically valid. We have also discussed the importance of both the participant and experimenter being blind to conditions, in case knowledge of the study objective can bias responses or the way in which the study is run. There are other issues of importance, which we will discuss briefly here. The first relates to how the participants for the studies are selected or sampled.

Sampling

How participants are selected or **sampled** for social psychological research is important. To illustrate why this is the case, consider a hypothetical study where a researcher wants to examine the relationship between self-esteem and dieting behaviour among women. The researcher sends the survey to subscribers of a high circulation women's fashion magazine. Why might this not be such a good choice? Well, potentially, this could be a biased sample. One could argue that women who subscribe to fashion magazines are already more focused on issues related to appearance

Sampling The process of selecting participants for a study.

and weight – more so than most women – so they may not be a representative sample from which to test a general hypothesis about female respondents. To take a representative sample, the researcher would be wise to cast the net more widely in order to test their hypothesis on a range of women with different interests and not such a narrow sample.

Random sampling Taking a random group of participants from a population (e.g., giving every British adult the chance to participate in a study of British attitudes towards the government).

Samples should also, where possible, be **random**. Put differently, from a population of interest, everyone should have an equal chance of being able to participate in the research (see Figure 1.9). For example, in a study of British attitudes towards the government, a researcher could not sample from only one region of Britain. A quick glance at the distribution of seats in the House of Commons across the UK (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, Plaid Cymru, Scottish National Party, Democratic Unionists and so on) suggests that the different regions vote quite differently. A sample of people from the southeast of England may have more positive attitudes towards a Conservative government (because they largely vote for this party), whereas the results may be entirely different in the northern regions of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales. So, in order to give a fair test of a hypothesis, it is important to sample randomly from the population of interest. Another way this can become a problem is through the issue of **self-selection**. This problem arises when participants select themselves for participation in a study because they are particularly interested or have a vested interest in the topic. For example, if a researcher advertises to the general public a study on conspiracy theories, they may attract a larger number of people who have a personal interest in conspiracy theories, thus potentially not being a representative sample of the population as a whole. Self-selection can influence the result in unpredictable ways. Again, researchers must be careful in their recruitment strategies to avoid potential biases creeping into the study.

Self-selection A problem arising when results in a study become difficult to interpret because participants with certain attitudes or characteristics disproportionately select themselves to participate in the research.

Convenience sampling Taking a group of participants from an available subgroup (e.g., undergraduate participants).

Of course, random sampling is not always possible. As you will notice throughout this book, social psychologists often make claims about human nature in general based on testing **convenience samples** of undergraduate participants, or participants who have been recruited from crowdsourcing platforms such as Amazon's Mechanical Turk or Prolific. Indeed, critical social psychologists see this as a key weakness of quantitative social psychology and it is a valid point. Not all research questions can be answered by testing the responses of undergraduate psychology students or small and non-representative samples of the population. On the other hand, it is important to consider the research question. Much of social psychology is concerned

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FIGURE 1.9 Sampling In social psychology, sampling should be representative of the population of interest and, where possible, be random.

with how people think, feel and behave with respect to social situations. Many of the processes of interest should be (and are) universal. In such cases, samples of undergraduate psychology students or participants recruited via crowdsourcing platforms should respond no differently to others. This is a point worth considering as you read this book. In general, convenience samples are used frequently in social psychological research because they are just that – convenient – and mean that the researcher does not have to go to great lengths to randomly or representatively sample from larger populations. In many cases, there may be no disadvantages in testing these smaller subsets of the population.

Another issue related to sampling is exactly how many participants are needed in a social psychological study. In general, this depends largely on the nature of the study. If it is a questionnaire or survey study, there are guidelines for the number of participants that are required based on the number of questions being asked and the level of *statistical significance* the researcher uses as their guideline. We will say more about this later. However, it is useful to note that it is not always necessary to sample a large number of people in order to draw conclusions about a population as a whole. More often than not, a smaller random sample or small convenience sample is enough to draw valid conclusions. For example, the UK population at the time of the 2017 general election was approximately 66 million, and yet exit polls consisted of a random sample of only a few thousand voters across the country. Apart from some notable examples, exit polls tend to provide accurate predictions of electoral outcomes.

Thus far, we have discussed the issue of sampling in quantitative research. Sampling in qualitative studies is a different matter. In qualitative work, sampling is not random – it is *purposive*. As we have discussed earlier, critical social psychologists do not deal in universals of human nature and therefore do not have the goal of generalizing their findings. Instead, these researchers are more concerned with people's experiences, so samples will be chosen specifically for people who have had the experiences of interest. The sample does not need to be representative of some larger population. Also, a study may only use one person as a participant (case study) who has been chosen for a particular reason.

Reliability and validity

Reliability is the extent to which the way a variable is measured, usually in a scale (e.g., extraversion), is likely to bring about consistent results. There are two types of reliability. The first, *test-retest reliability*, is the similarity in measurements taken by a single person at different times. In other words, if a person responded to an extraversion scale twice, the scale would be deemed to be reliable if the responses were consistent between the first time and the second time, assuming that the conditions for taking the test were the same. The second, *internal consistency,* refers to the consistency across items within the scale. In other words, do all the items in the scale measure the same thing? Typically, scales designed to measure social psychological and personality constructs have at least two items, so the internal consistency of a scale can be determined by the correlation between the items within the scale. If the coefficient (Cronbach's alpha statistic is most common here) is high, then the scale is said to be internally consistent. As a general rule of thumb, a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.7 or above signifies a reliable scale (Nunnally, 1978).

Reliability The extent to which the way a variable is measured is likely to yield consistent results.

Reliability is different to validity. Specifically, while a scale may be reliable, this means that it is consistently measuring something, but we do not necessarily know what. A researcher cannot be sure that the scale is measuring what it is supposed to be measuring: in other words, its **construct validity** (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). Construct validity can be assessed in various ways (for more detail, see Boag, 2015; Shaffer, DeGeest & Li, 2016; and especially Flake, Pek & Hehman, 2017 for a summary of current 'best practice'; for an example of testing construct validity in measures of mindfulness, see Goldberg et al., 2016; for an example in the measurement of narcissism, see Miller, Lynam & Campbell, 2016). A construct valid measure should be reliably correlated with other measures of the same variable. For instance, a scale of

Construct validity The extent to which a test measures the thing it claims to be measuring.

extraversion (and there are many) is highly unlikely to be construct valid if it is correlated only weakly with other extraversion scales. Ideally, it should also be associated with other indicators of extraversion. For example, a person scoring highly on an extraversion scale should also show behavioural signs of extraversion. Measures of validity typically reveal lower correlations than those for reliability. A scale may satisfy Nunnally's (1978) criterion of a correlation of 0.7, but the relationship between a scale of extraversion and a person's number of friends may only be 0.4. That is, a scale can be deemed valid even though the correlation between the responses on the scale and responses on the phenomenon or phenomena of interest is fairly low. Social psychologists may also begin to examine the validity of their measures right from the beginning of scale development. Specifically, they will examine the items they have chosen for what is known as *face validity* – a qualitative appraisal of whether the scale measures the phenomenon or phenomena of interest. If the items have been developed from a particular theoretical perspective, then the researcher will qualitatively appraise the items for their *content validity* to determine whether all phenomena of importance to the theory have been covered.

Statistical significance

Statistical significance The measure of the probability that a given finding could have occurred by chance.

One of the most important aspects of quantitative social psychology is its test of **statistical significance**. When a researcher has a finding, such as a predicted difference between two experimental conditions or a significant correlation between two variables, this is interesting, but is it meaningful? Is the finding of sufficient importance to be able to make conclusions about it? To answer these questions, quantitative social psychologists determine the statistical significance of their findings. This determines the probability that the finding of interest could have occurred by chance alone. The researcher sets the highest possible significance level – indicated by a probability out of 100 – they would be satisfied with. Convention in social psychology is that the probability (or *p* value) needs to be less than .05 (a chance of 1 in 20) or .01 (a chance of 1 in 100) for the result to be of statistical significance, and therefore of social psychological significance.

We will not talk about the specific tests that social psychologists use to determine statistical significance because this is the realm of statistical textbooks. Suffice it to say, quantitative social psychologists use a range of statistical tests to establish the reliability of their findings. A significant finding typically occurs because of the size of the difference between experimental conditions, or the size of a correlation. However, the size of the sample also matters. For example, some very small correlations can be significant when the sample size is large. Statistical significance may not always be the best index of the actual importance of a research finding.

BASIC AND APPLIED RESEARCH

Basic research Focuses on fundamental questions about people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Applied research Applies basic research to problems or social issues.

Another key distinction in social psychological research is that of basic versus applied research. **Basic research** focuses on fundamental questions about people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours. For example, a social psychologist may investigate why people help others, what factors cause them to fall in and out of love, and what persuasive techniques are most effective. Such questions lie at the heart of human nature. Basic social psychology is typically oriented towards using the findings to develop further theoretical understanding on a topic. However, many social psychologists conduct **applied research**, which takes information that is learned from basic research and applies it to particular problems or issues, often with the aim of enhancing the quality of everyday life. Applied research typically focuses on areas such as health, business, law, the environment and politics. For example, applied social psychologists can help employers hire more suitable employees. They can also design interventions to address social problems, such as excess energy use, prejudice, smoking, criminal behaviour, or educational issues (see the Social Psychology in the Real World box).

Basic and applied psychology are closely related and there is a two-way relationship between the two. Specifically, basic research may mean that researchers develop theories that result in the development of **interventions** – efforts to change people's behaviour. One good example of this in social psychology is the work associated with the theory of planned behaviour, which is a

Interventions
Used in applied social psychology, these are efforts to change people's behaviour.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Social psychology at work in the classroom

The work of social psychologist Carol Dweck has been influential in the field of education, helping practitioners to understand what kind of praise and criticism 'work' best to keep children motivated and focused on their learning. In particular, Dweck (1999) and Kamins and Dweck (1999) have argued that praise can be distinguished between comments that are aimed at evaluating a person's traits or the person as a whole (e.g., 'You are a clever girl'), and comments that focus on the person's effort or strategies (e.g., 'You found a good way to do it'). Kamins and Dweck (1999) showed that praising a child in *person* terms after they succeed leads to helpless responses to subsequent failures more than when the feedback relates to the concrete *process* through which the success was reached. Comparing the two groups' responses on measures such as persistence on the task, self-esteem and motivation, the children who had been praised in process terms showed more positive outcomes than the children who had been praised in person terms.

Dweck and colleagues argued that 'person praise' leads children to interpret their achievements in trait terms and encourages a fixed mindset of success more so than 'process praise', which focuses more on effort and behaviour. Following person praise, failures may signal that outcomes are due to poor ability or negative traits, thus undermining performance evaluations, affect, motivation and leading to a helpless response. These findings are striking because the differences in the wording of the feedback are generally so small (e.g., 'You are a good

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drawer' versus 'You did a good job drawing') that the person giving the feedback may not even notice the difference. Further, even if teachers do notice the difference, they may not be aware that the different forms of feedback have contrasting implications. Based on these findings, it is unsurprising that the education sector strongly promotes process-related praise (rather than person-related) in interventions to improve students' performance (Rathvon, 2008). Many intervention programmes, such as the online interactive 'MindsetWorks' programme, apply the findings of Dweck's work in order to help students to develop a growth mindset of intelligence and help them deal with academic challenges. Take a look at Dweck's (2017) article in which she describes her career investigating this topic, but also take a look at a recent analysis suggesting that the effects of the different kinds of feedback are small (Sisk, Burgoyne, Sun, Butler & Macnamara, 2018).

Questions

1. We know the effects of 'person praise' and 'process praise'. What do you think the impact of giving students 'no praise' might be?
2. Can you think of other domains in which Dweck's work may be applied?
3. Do you think that a child's mindset can be changed?
4. Shortly, we will talk about research ethics and this research is a good way to start you thinking about ethical issues in social psychological research. Conducting research with children can sometimes be an ethical minefield, and conducting work on praise and criticism of children creates a variety of ethical issues. For example, how did the experimenter ensure that the children in the 'person' condition did not continue to feel helpless after the experiment finished? Read one of Dweck's empirical articles and see how she dealt with such issues.

theory about the link between attitudes and behaviour (Ajzen, 1985; see also Chapter 4). Much of the basic research associated with this theory identifies the various pathways in the theory, how attitudes become accessible and how (and when) attitudes predict what people do. However, the theory has been applied in many studies to the study of the relationships between beliefs, attitudes, behavioural intentions and behaviours in many applied fields, such as advertising and health (e.g., Albarracín, Johnson, Fishbein & Muellerleile, 2001; Ajzen, 1988; Armitage & Conner, 2001; Conner, Kirk, Cade & Barrett, 2003; Hagger, Chan, Protogerou & Chatzisarantis, 2016; Sheeran & Taylor, 1999). Basic research can, therefore, inform applied research that attempts to improve some aspect of people's lives. However, it is also the case that the results obtained from applied research can enable basic social psychologists to further develop theories. For example, practically testing the theory of planned behaviour in health settings gives researchers an idea of what aspects of the theory work and what aspects need to be modified. So, it is perhaps unsurprising that many social psychologists have both basic and applied interests.

CULTURAL ISSUES

Another important issue to consider in social psychology is the influence of culture. We have spent some time thus far discussing how the majority of social psychologists are interested in the 'universals' of human nature, of which there appear to be many. However, there are some key social psychological phenomena and processes on which cultures differ. For example, all cultures have norms and standards of behaviour, but these are not necessarily the same across cultures or are expressed differently across cultures. Gender roles differ across cultures (e.g., Croft, Schmader & Block, 2015; Dasgupta, 1998; Fischer, Rodriguez Mosquera, van Vianen & Manstead, 2004), as do nonverbal behaviours (e.g., Matsumoto, 2006). In general, cultures can have a strong influence on how people think about themselves and the social environment (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2016; Matsumoto & Yoo, 2006). Try the Exploring Further activity below before you read on.

Individualist cultures Cultures where people see themselves as independent entities with independent characteristics and voluntary social bonds.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Take a piece of paper and write down ten things that define who you are. After you have made your list, tally up the number of 'I'-related statements you used and how many of your self-descriptions relate to personal traits (e.g., 'I am friendly', 'I am a student'). Compare this with the number of times the self is defined in terms of collective aspects (e.g., 'sister', 'grandchild'). How do you think your responses are influenced by your cultural origins? If you come from a different culture to some of your friends, compare your responses to theirs. Is there a difference in the number of 'I' self-descriptions you used compared to your friends? This exercise can reveal how culture influences the self-concept – a key area in social psychology.

Collectivist cultures Cultures where people see themselves as dependent on others with characteristics that respond to social situations, and important and involuntary social bonds.

One of the most important features of culture that determines differences in social psychological phenomena is whether it is an **individualist culture** or a **collectivist culture** (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus & Nisbett, 1998; Hofstede, 1980; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1994; Triandis, 1989, 1995). Individualist cultures are characterized by their independence. People within individualist cultures see themselves as distinct social beings, separate from each other and having characteristics that make them distinct from others. Social relationships are important, but are seen as voluntary. Collectivist cultures, on the other hand, are characterized by their interconnectedness with others. People within collectivist cultures see themselves

as social beings who are inextricably linked to others, and having characteristics that are responsive to the social situation. Social relationships are vital and involuntary – they are part of what makes a person who they are. You can probably guess which countries fit broadly into each category. Western cultures such as Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the USA are individualist cultures, while Eastern cultures, such as China, Japan, Korea, and many Latin American cultures, are more collectivist. Although there is some evidence that individualism is increasing across the world (Santos, Varnum & Grossman, 2017), significant cultural differences still exist.

TABLE 1.1 Characteristics of individualist and collectivist cultures

Individualist	Collectivist
Uniqueness	Belonging
Expressing one's own views	Being aware of others' views
Promotion of one's own goals	Promotion of others' goals
Directness	Indirectness

Source: Markus and Kitayama (1991)

The key differences between individualist and collectivist cultures are given in Table 1.1.

Given these differences, it is probably not surprising to learn that social psychological phenomena depend heavily on the cultural orientation of the people involved. We discuss these differences in more detail throughout the book. For example, in Chapter 2, we discuss how people's concept of self differs across the two broad types of culture. In response to the question 'Who are you?', people from individualist cultures tend to respond with more 'I'-related statements (e.g., 'I am clever', 'I like reading books'), whereas participants from collectivist cultures tend to respond with statements related to group membership or relationships (e.g., 'I am a Muslim', 'I am a mother') (Dhawan, Roseman, Thapa & Rettek, 1995; Heine & Lehman, 1997; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Trafimow, Triandis & Goto, 1991; Yik, Bond & Paulhus, 1998). This distinction begins early in life, with children at age six years displaying this cultural difference (Wang, 2006). This is just one example of social psychological evidence from one culture that may not automatically apply to all cultures.

Researchers need to examine theories and test hypotheses across different cultures and put away the assumption that people in different cultures all think and act the same way. A great deal of information can be missed if culture is not taken into account. As you read this book, you may justifiably criticize social psychology for being too 'Western'. Most of the studies you will read about are based on data collected in white, English-speaking countries (in particular the USA), and therefore a lot of social psychological knowledge we have is drawn from a relatively homogeneous group of participants. So, when we learn about 'universals' of human thought and behaviour, while many phenomena are probably universal, we can only ever really be sure that we know about 'universals' of White, American undergraduate students or people who sign up to research via crowdsourcing platforms, unless hypotheses are tested more broadly. It is important to keep this issue at the back of your mind as you read about evidence drawn from social psychological studies.

RESEARCH ETHICS

Social psychologists carry out their research with human participants, or utilize data that have been provided by human participants. Thus, it is vital that research is carried out with the safety and privacy of participants firmly in mind. All social psychologists receive training in research

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ethics throughout the course of their studies, and so we begin with an overview of these important, basic ethical principles.

When conducting research with human participants, it is vital that they have given their **informed consent** to take part in the research. This principle ensures that participants know exactly what is going to happen in an experiment or study and then they give their consent. In other words, participants should only be asked to agree to take part after they have been fully informed about the purpose of the study and how it will be conducted. However, this principle is difficult to observe when research is conducted with children as participants, because it is not always possible to communicate the intentions and methods of research to children in a way they completely understand. In such cases, it is possible to gain the consent of parents and carers, who act in the children's best interests and make the informed decision about consenting to participate in the research.

Informed consent Participants need to indicate their willingness to participate in research after being fully informed about what the research involves.

The principle of informed consent is further complicated by the use of **deception**, a methodological technique frequently used in social psychological research. Deception occurs when a participant is misled about some aspect or aspects of the research – typically something about the purpose of a particular feature of the research method – or is not made fully aware of the specific purpose of the study. Deception is an important feature of social psychological research and does not make the research unethical. In some cases, it is difficult to test a hypothesis unless deception is used. For example, social psychological research often makes use of **confederates** – members of the research team who pose as participants and follow a predetermined procedure set up by the experimenter – to test how people interact in specific situations. The participant is misled to think they are interacting with a real person when, in fact, they are not. However, this type of method allows experimenters to control specific aspects of the experiment and test the effect of only those that are of interest.

Deception In social psychology, deception is a case where the participants are misled about the purpose of the research or some aspect of the research.

Confederate A member of the research team who poses as a real participant and is instructed to interact or respond in a predetermined way.

In such situations where the use of deception is crucial to test hypotheses, the deception can be deemed to be appropriate if the following conditions are met:

1. A non-deceptive method to study the same phenomenon does not exist.
2. The study has the possibility of making a significant contribution to scientific knowledge.
3. The deception is not expected to cause the participant any harm or significant emotional distress.

These factors are typically judged by an **ethics committee**. You may also come across the term 'institutional review board', which is used in the USA and Canada to refer to ethics committees. Ethics committees closely examine research proposals and determine whether the proposed research is ethical. In a case where deception is proposed, the committee decides, according to the three criteria above, whether the deception is justified. If some aspect of the study is deemed to be overly detrimental to the participants, it will be refused ethical clearance. In such cases, the researcher needs to make changes to the procedure and then resubmit the proposal for further evaluation.

Ethics committee A committee that evaluates the ethicality of research proposals and judges whether they are appropriate to investigate.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Take a look at the British Psychological Society's ethical code of conduct for carrying out research with human participants. You will find this via the homepage of the British Psychological Society (www.bps.org). Before you conduct any research involving human participants, you need to be familiar with these guidelines or others that apply in your country. It is also likely that you will need to apply for ethical approval to conduct your research.

Ethics committees do an important job. However, they did not always exist and many famous studies in social psychology were conducted without ethical clearance. In Chapter 9, for example, you will read about Stanley Milgram's obedience studies, where participants were told that their task was to deliver strong electrical shocks to another participant. The shocks were never given, but the participants were led to believe that the recipient (a confederate) was experiencing extreme pain. Many of the participants exhibited signs of emotional distress as a result of taking part in this procedure. One might speculate as to whether such an experiment would be granted ethical clearance today. This would indeed pose some serious questions for an ethics committee. However, even in such an extreme case, the committee would carefully consider the pros and cons of the study – does the knowledge that could potentially be gained from the study outweigh the negative aspects? In the case of Milgram's studies, one would have to say 'yes'. Much of what social psychologists now know about obedience and compliance come from Milgram's studies. Even today, studies running – and largely affirming – Milgram's results receive ethical clearance, as you will later read.

Another key principle of conducting ethical research is to fully **debrief** participants at the conclusion of the study. It is important to let research participants know the true nature of a study, its purpose and hypotheses so that they know exactly why they did what they did. Note that debriefing can also be important to ensure that participants have understood an experimental manipulation, so it serves the purpose of maintaining internal validity during the study as well as upholding ethical standards after the study. Participants are also free to withdraw their consent and have their personal responses removed from the study if they are unhappy with any aspect of the study. As mentioned earlier, these principles are in place to protect the participant from harm or emotional distress and protect their privacy. Following ethical guidelines also means that research participants are treated with respect.

Debrief Participants are informed about the purpose, aims and hypotheses of the research.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

Social psychology is closely related to other branches of psychology, such as personality, clinical, cognitive, forensic and cyberpsychology. Social psychology is also closely related to academic disciplines outside psychology, such as biology, neuroscience, sociology, social anthropology

and economics. In this section, we outline some of the ways in which social psychology has been influenced by these disciplines and sub-disciplines, as well as the impact that social psychology has had on them.

Personality psychology

Also referred to as the study of individual differences, personality psychology, a close relation of social psychology, is referred to as the study of how people come to be who they are (Murray & McAdams, 2007). Whilst personality psychology mainly focuses on aspects of the individual, and social psychology on aspects of the situation, the two perspectives are tightly interwoven in psychological explanations of human behaviour. Furthermore, social psychologists are often interested in individual differences, and psychologists who study personality and individual differences often link their work to the study of social psychological processes.

Clinical psychology

Clinical psychologists attempt to understand, prevent and relieve psychologically based problems and promote wellbeing. For example, clinical psychology focuses on understanding and helping people with psychological disorders, such as bipolar mood disorder, schizophrenia, depression and phobias. Social and clinical psychology are linked in many ways and the treatments used by clinical psychologists are often informed by social psychological findings. For example, social psychologists study the processes underlying addictive behaviours (e.g., Fishbein, 1982; Stroebe, 2000), eating disorders (e.g., Harrison, 2001; Stice, 2002), relationship satisfaction (e.g., Pearson, Watkins, Kuyken & Mullan, 2010; Vinokur, Price & Caplan, 1996) and the practice of safe sex (e.g., Armitage & Talibudeen, 2010; Sheeran, 2002).

Cognitive psychology

Cognitive psychology is concerned with the study of mental processes. More specifically, it is the study of how people perceive, remember, think, speak and how they solve problems. Cognitive psychology has close links to social psychology and, indeed, a sub-discipline called *social cognition*, which we discuss in some detail in Chapter 3 and throughout this book, is a combination of social and cognitive psychology. It is the study of how people think about themselves and the social world and, in particular, how they make decisions and judgements concerning the social world. One of the main elements of theories in social cognition is that social processes occur as a result of 'cognitive elements', such as stereotypes, that are represented in the brain. Social cognition applies many theories and paradigms from cognitive psychology, focusing on areas such as reasoning, attention and memory (Greifeneder, Bless & Fiedler, 2017).

Forensic psychology

Forensic psychology is a sub-discipline that deals with both psychology and the legal system. It is a popular topic among students, thanks, in part, to fashionable television and cinematic portrayals of forensic psychologists, such as in *Cracker* and *Silence of the Lambs*. Forensic psychology is a rapidly developing scientific branch of applied psychology, drawing on clinical, cognitive and social psychology to address legal and criminal issues (Pozzulo, Bennell & Forth, 2013). Social psychology plays an important role in theories of criminal behaviour and therefore closely informs a great deal of research conducted in forensic psychology.

Cyberpsychology

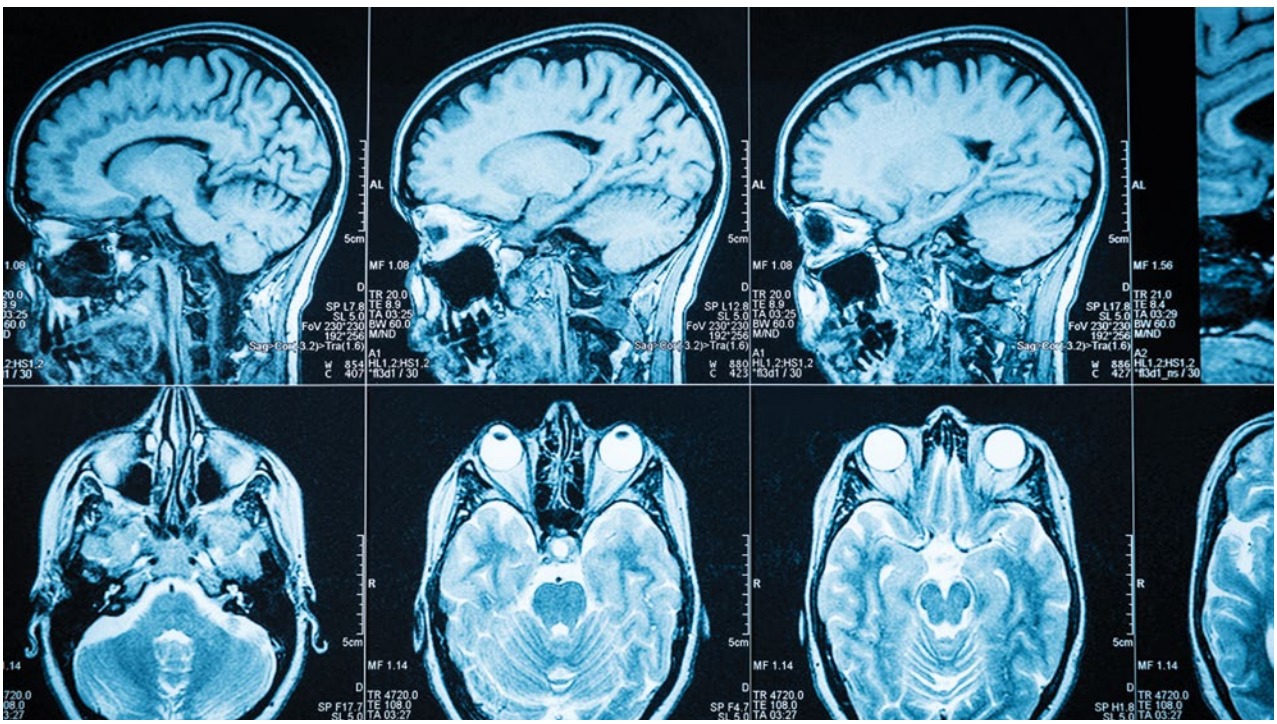
Cyberpsychology deals with the psychological phenomena associated with emerging technology and human-technology interaction. As a significant proportion of the world is now connected to the Internet and communication technology is advancing so quickly, investigations of online social behaviour are becoming increasingly important and of interest to many social psychologists (Attrill, 2015).

Biology and neuroscience

Biologists examine the nature, function and evolution of living things. They examine how genetic factors influence people and what they do. As such, there is a significant link between biology and social psychology. In particular, recent years have seen the rise in prominence of *evolutionary psychology,* which approaches the study of human behaviour based on the assumption that the things people do (and think about) are a result of human evolution and, therefore, are a result of human biology (e.g., Buss, 2015; Neuberg, Kenrick and Schaller, 2011). Put simply, social behaviour and social thinking have biological roots. The general argument underlying evolutionary psychology is that traits and behaviours have evolved to help humans solve recurrent problems in ancestral contexts. Social psychologists have also become interested in the parts of the brain that are associated with various social psychological phenomena such as emotions and problem solving (Harmon-Jones & Inzlicht, 2016). They use neuroimaging techniques, such as positron emission tomography, event-related potentials (ERPs) using electroencephalography (EEG), and transcranial magnetic stimulation, to examine where in the brain various social processes occur. Known as **social cognitive neuroscience**, or **social neuroscience**, this is a fast growing sub-discipline in social psychology. The use of **functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)** (Figure 1.10) in social psychological research has exploded since 2000, and social psychologists now have a great deal of knowledge about things such as how people react to social rejection (e.g., Eisenberger, Lieberman & Williams, 2003),

Social cognitive neuroscience/ social neuroscience Study of processes in the brain that allows people to understand others and themselves, and to successfully navigate the social world.

Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) A type of neuroimaging scan used by social psychologists to measure the change in blood flow that occurs in the brain during social tasks.



iStock.com/Trifonov_Evgeniy

FIGURE 1.10 fMRI scans of the brain fMRI is a technique used widely in social neuroscience research to isolate parts of the brain associated with social psychological processes.

how people understand the self (e.g., Kelley et al., 2002), reactions to social interactions (e.g., Iacoboni et al., 2004), and social cognitive processing (e.g., Amodio & Frith, 2006). We will discuss some of these findings in social cognitive neuroscience throughout this book.

Sociology and social anthropology

Social psychologists address many of the same issues as sociologists and social anthropologists. For example, all three disciplines study the effects of culture, group membership, language and intergroup behaviour. However, these topics are approached in different ways. Specifically, while social psychologists typically focus on the effects of culture, groups and so on, on individual members of a group (or indeed the individual's effect on cultures and groups), sociologists and anthropologists typically focus on the group or culture as a whole – how they are organized and how they function and change (Giddens & Sutton, 2013). The insights gained from sociology and social anthropology influence the theories and research of social psychology, and vice versa.

Economics

Social psychological principles are being used increasingly in the study of economics. Economics is often concerned with how people make trade-offs between various resources and options. For example, an economist may study how people choose to save versus spend their earnings, or how they take risks in order to make monetary gains. Social psychological research on decision-making processes is applicable to these sorts of economic questions. Of particular interest to social psychology, economists study why people make choices that are not always best for them. For example, why do people donate to charity when it is not in their own financial interests? The field of *behavioural economics* uses insights gained from psychology (including social psychology) to understand how people make such economic decisions (e.g., Kahneman, 2003). In 2002, psychologist Professor Daniel Kahneman was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics, largely due to his focus on issues relevant to both psychology and economics, such as fairness in the marketplace. Together with Amos Tversky, Kahneman developed prospect theory, which describes decisions between alternatives when the choice involves risk or uncertain outcomes (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1992). The theory describes how people evaluate potential gains and losses in making decisions, including financial ones.

DISSEMINATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The primary means by which social psychologists communicate their findings to the scientific community is through publishing their work in scientific journals. As you progress through your studies, you will become familiar with all the major journals (and many others). There has been a marked increase in the number of social psychological journals in recent years.

Many of the major journals publish work on personality and social psychology alongside each other, again reflecting the closeness of these two disciplines. Examples of such journals are the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* and *Social Psychological and Personality Science*. Other journals focus specifically on social psychology, such as the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* the *European Journal of Social Psychology* and the *British Journal of Social Psychology*. Other journals and volumes publish reviews of social psychological research, where authors consider the state of the art on a particular topic of research. Examples of such outlets are *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* and *Personality and Social Psychology Review*. Finally, some journals focus on specific aspects of social psychology such as *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, Social Influence, Law and Human Behaviour, Social Cognition* and *Sex*

Roles. Qualitative research is published in journals such as *Discourse Studies, Feminism and Psychology* and *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* and some of the more 'mainstream' journals such as the *British Journal of Social Psychology* frequently publish qualitative research. Social psychologists also publish their work in multidisciplinary, applied, clinical, educational, biological and experimental journals, such as *Psychological Review*, *Psychological Science* and *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General,* reflecting the importance of social psychology across psychology as a whole.

EXPLORING FURTHER

As an exercise, log in to Web of Science and go to the Social Sciences Journal Citation Reports. Select 'Psychology – Social' from the list of areas and take a look at the range of social psychology journals in which social psychologists publish their research. If your learning institution does not subscribe to Web of Science, try an Internet search of 'journals in social psychology'.

Social psychologists often disseminate their research in book chapters. Also, social psychologists are increasingly making use of tools such as Facebook, Twitter, ResearchGate, LinkedIn and other online tools such as blogs to share their research and insights. Many researchers make their findings available publicly before they publish them in academic journals, using pre-print repositories such as PsyArXiv which is hosted by the Center for Open Science. The British Psychological Society runs a brilliant research digest (BPS Research Digest), providing a weekly highlight of some of the most interesting papers in psychology, many of which are social psychology papers. In summary, social psychology has a significant presence within psychology, across other disciplines and within the general public.

CRITICAL THINKING IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Critical thinking is crucial to learning and doing social psychology, just as it is crucial in related disciplines. A trained social psychologist should be able to read each theoretical claim and ask, is it logical and coherent? Does it fit in with what we already know about related topics in social psychology? What is the evidence for it and how convincing is that evidence? How much evidence is there, and what is the quality of the evidence? Does it really support the theory? As a student of social psychology, you are therefore encouraged to evaluate what you learn critically. In doing so, you will have a clearer picture of a research topic and take an important skill with you into the next phase of your lives (Chapter 15). In this section, we discuss what critical thinking is, steps you can follow to do it successfully and some specifics about theories, studies and social psychology to bear in mind.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Read Butler (2012) for evidence that critical thinking skills predict better life outcomes, for example in personal finances, relationships and even health (though bear in mind that this evidence is correlational and does not therefore establish a causal relationship!).

Critical thinking is a difficult concept to define, but it embraces the ability and willingness to *analyse* arguments or evidence (i.e., break them down into parts and categorize them), *synthesize* them (i.e., incorporate multiple pieces of evidence into one argument, or put together aspects of different arguments), and *evaluate* them (i.e., determine whether arguments are logical, and evidence is sound) (Moseley, Elliott, Gregson & Higgins, 2005). It is very important to remember that critical thinking is not negative thinking – it also involves an appreciation of the *strengths* of theory and research. After reviewing many definitions of critical thinking, Griggs, Jackson, Marek and Christopher (1998) describe it in these terms:

> a process of evaluating evidence for certain claims, determining whether presented conclusions logically follow from this evidence, and considering alternative explanations. Critical thinkers exhibit open-mindedness, tolerance of ambiguity; and a skeptical, questioning attitude. (p. 256)

Critical thinking is itself a psychological variable. As such, it can be measured (Facione, 1990; Facione, Facione & Giancarlo, 1996; Halpern, 2010; Ku, 2009). Like many other variables, it can be changed (Dwyer, Hogan & Stewart, 2014). As you become more educated, you become more of a critical thinker (Huber & Kuncel, 2016). This is especially true when teachers explicitly encourage you to think critically (as we are doing now), and engage in practices that facilitate it. These practices include engaging you in dialogue and teaching concepts in the context of real-world issues that you find interesting (Abrami et al., 2015). Like other variables, it differs between people: some people are more critical thinkers than others (Jiang, Gao & Yang, 2018). Like other variables, it is correlated with other differences between people: as Griggs et al. (1998) suggest, people who are more open-minded (see Chapters 4 and 11) turn out to be more critical (Stanovich & West, 1997; Stenhouse et al., 2018).

As a psychological variable, critical thinking is also strongly related to creativity. This relationship is so strong that when Wechsler et al. (2018) had participants complete established measures of critical and creative thinking, they could find no clear distinction between the two (using a statistical technique called factor analysis). In other words, the measures of critical and creative thinking seemed to be measuring the same thing. This makes sense, because critical thinking often relies on *imagination*. In particular, Epstude and Roese (2008) argue that counterfactual thinking – imagining alternatives to what has happened – is crucial to critical thinking. To evaluate how well a theory explains something like reductions in prejudice, for example, it helps to be able to imagine alternative explanations. To evaluate how convincingly a study supports researchers' conclusions, it helps to be able to imagine how the results could have been different if the study were run differently, or in a different situation.

A radical, and we think very useful, version of this principle of counterfactual thinking was put forward by the critical social psychologist Billig (1996) under the influence of the philosopher Hegel (Maybee, 2016). Billig argued that every argument should be considered against (at least) the possibility of its opposite (see also Manning, Levine & Collins, 2007). In Chapter 14 we discuss an example: many studies between the 1960s and 80s found that people are much more likely to intervene to help strangers in emergency situations when they are alone, than when they are surrounded by other people. This research on what is termed 'bystander intervention' seemed to support an intuitive, rather simple view of human nature: individuals are inherently good (De Freitas et al., 2018; Newman, Bloom & Knobe, 2014), but are corrupted by the influence of groups (think 'peer pressure' – see also Chapter 9). But what if we imagine that the opposite is true – that groups (at least sometimes, or in some respects) might be a good influence on people, and that people may be more likely to help when surrounded by others than when alone?

Imagining that the opposite is true is exactly what led researchers in the 1990s and 2000s to devise studies showing that there are indeed situations in which the presence of others *increases*, rather than decreases, a person's willingness to help. For example, when the person who needs help belongs to the same social group as the potential helper (e.g., is a fan of the same sports team). Here, then, is evidence that in general, and in the specific bystander intervention situation, groups can be a good influence on people. This work improved our theoretical understanding of the social psychology of groups.

We recommend that you always keep Billig's (1996) principle in mind when learning about social psychology. Try to imagine how the story told by a theory or a study might not be true, or the whole truth, or even that the very opposite may be true. One of the most important functions of a textbook is to provide a comprehensive summary of a discipline. This means there simply is not space for us to critically evaluate all of the theory and research that is covered in your coursework; in your own work, you will normally be expected to produce a more critical evaluation of most of the material. We have, however, provided a variety of examples: the Critical Focus boxes in each chapter in this book take a close and critical look at findings and theories in the field, and you will also encounter critiques of theories and studies in the main text. For example, in Chapter 13 we discuss the 'warrior gene' hypothesis. A specific mutation of an identified gene may be associated with aggression, leading some scholars to name it the 'warrior gene' – a notion that was successfully used by a murderer with this mutation to get his sentence reduced. But, to have the 'warrior gene' is, in fact, to be one of 34 per cent of White people. If the warrior gene was really deserving of its name, we would expect one in every three White people to be extremely violent. Being informed about the prevalence of this genetic mutation, imagining what life would be like if this common gene really did what it has been claimed to do, and comparing this imagined reality to real life, quickly reveals that the theoretical claim is overblown.

We now propose some specific processes to enhance your critical thinking in social psychology, and the success, enjoyment and personal growth that you can take from your studies. Our proposals are indebted to scholars who have studied critical thinking and how it can be encouraged in university education, and above all Halpern (1998) who outlines these steps, and more besides.

1. Ask 'What additional information do I need before answering the question?'

Whether the question is one in your own mind, set in an essay question or one that you are trying to examine in your own research, an essential part of any learning process is acknowledging that you do not yet know everything you need to know. Becoming more informed will sharpen and improve your critical thinking, and your awareness of alternative theories, methods and findings. That said, do not be afraid of noting your own intuitive reactions to the topic early in the process – these might turn out to be valuable insights. Sometimes, researchers get so ingrained in ways of thinking and doing research on a topic that they neglect other possibilities.

In this book, we get you started by providing a lot of information on the core topics of social psychology, as will other materials provided in your course, such as lectures and reading lists. When you are answering an essay question, you should always start by reading through lecture notes and any readings recommended by your lecturer. Throughout this book we also cite thousands of articles, most of which should be accessible through your institution's library or other Internet sources. You can find these listed in full in the References section at the end of this book.

EXPLORING FURTHER

We also recommend two free-to-use Internet services: Google Scholar and ResearchGate. Google Scholar is a huge, easy to search database of just about everything published in academic research. You can search by the title of a paper, by author or by journal, and also using key words that appear in the article, abstract or title. Basic searches produce many results. Combining search terms will narrow down your searches (the 'advanced search' option is recommended). You can also change settings in Google Scholar to ask for 'library links'. Search for your institution in it, and Google Scholar will provide you with a link to articles that are held by your library. Another free-to-use service is ResearchGate. You can create a profile on this service, and then search for authors or articles. Authors often post pre-prints (copies of articles that are not yet published) or versions of articles and chapters that might not be held by your library. In databases like these, you can see how many times a given article or chapter has been cited, which gives you an indication of how much influence it has had. You can click on the 'times cited' links to see what articles and chapters, specifically, have cited it. This allows you to travel backwards and forwards in time to see what the most up-to-date research is showing, and where ideas and methods originated. We have used both Google Scholar and ResearchGate extensively in the preparation of this book, and we both have profiles on these databases.

2. Ask 'Which information is most important, and which is least important?'

Asking these questions focuses your mind on the type of information you should be seeking, and prioritizing in your thinking and writing. The quality of the evidence is important. Theories, and in particular research evidence, put forward in scientific articles cited throughout this book have usually passed a basic test of quality: these are reviewed by journal editors and other experts before they are published. That said, no theory or study is without its flaws and omissions and none should ever be exempt from critical thinking. The relevance of the information to your question is also extremely important. Ask yourself 'Does this piece of information help me to understand the question?' If you are writing an essay or literature review, ask yourself 'Does it help me to answer the question, to convince and inform the reader of my argument?' Give priority – and usually longer coverage – to pieces of information where the answer is emphatically, yes.

3. State the problem you are trying to solve in at least two ways

Many essay questions, and a lot of interesting and important real-world problems, are rather open-ended. Seeing the problem from different perspectives, and finding ways to narrow it down, are essential parts of critical thinking (Buunk & van Vugt, 2008). Of course, it is extremely important, if you are answering an essay question in your coursework, that you make sure your answer addresses the actual question. However, to do that really well, it is worth taking some time to carefully read the question and to think about what it is asking you to do, and the different ways the question could be framed. For example, if your question or problem is 'Does contact between groups reduce prejudice?', inspired by Billig (1996), you could try flipping the question on its head, and ask 'Does contact between groups ever *in*crease prejudice?' This will encourage you to look for cases – and there are several – where contact can make things worse, and to critiques of contact as a

method. This gives you, and your reader, a more critical, nuanced understanding of the topic. Another way to frame the question is 'How much does contact reduce prejudice?' – considering how big the effect is gives you and your reader an understanding of how wise it is to use contact to reduce prejudice, and weigh costs and benefits of the technique against alternatives. Yet another way is 'When and how does contact reduce prejudice?', which will draw your attention to the psychological processes that make contact work, and determine when it perhaps is not likely to work. Finally, you might ask 'Does contact reduce prejudice at the cost of important side effects?'. For example, some research suggests that contact can reduce support among members of minority and disadvantaged groups for changes that would improve their situation (Chapter 12). Sometimes, researchers focus too much on just one outcome, and forget to study other ones. Ideally, social psychological studies of interventions on outcomes like prejudice should also look out for side effects, in the same way as drug trials do. Unfortunately, this is rare.

4. List two solutions for a problem, and present two arguments that support a conclusion and two that do not support a conclusion

Halpern (1998) suggests that you should entertain both sides of an argument. Seeing the limitations of both may lead you to adopt some new, third position. Even if you come down clearly on one side of an argument, you will be in a better position to defend it from counterarguments and apparently contradictory evidence. The steps we have outlined thus far, including reading to discover alternative theoretical perspectives, methods and findings, and using your imagination to reframe the question and imagine other possibilities will help you do this.

5. Ask 'What two actions would I take to improve the design of a study that was described?'

As we have suggested, no one study can ever deliver the final word on a topic. Its results could have been a fluke, its IVs and DVs may have failed to capture important aspects of the things they were designed to manipulate or measure, and may instead have manipulated or measured things that they were not designed to measure (confounding). The results of a study may hold true in some contexts (the laboratory, a certain country or culture) and not others (Pettigrew, 2018). Its sample may be too small, or too unrepresentative of the intended population. Thinking about what you would change about a study to improve it can help you turn criticisms into constructive suggestions. The key to doing this well is to think about how and why the results might be different if you made a certain change – which again, is a matter of informed imagination. It is *not* critical thinking to merely claim that a study's sample is unrepresentative of some more general population. Nor is it critical thinking to assert that the results of a study do not generalize to other situations because it was an artificial laboratory study. These might be valuable starting points, but the key is to articulate how and why, specifically, this might have affected the results, and how different samples or methods might produce different findings.

So, what factors, specifically, should you look for when you are critically evaluating evidence and studies? For the most part, you should focus on *visible factors* that might give cause for concern. These are things that you can see, from reading a theory or study, comparing it to other theories and studies, and using your growing critical thinking skills. There are also *invisible factors* operating in the background that can compromise the quality of theory and research. They are invisible in the sense that it is very hard to demonstrate that they have compromised any one theory or study.

Visible factors

We have already covered most of the visible threats to the validity of theory and research. Is a theory logical and consistent with what we already know? Are the materials and procedure of a study appropriate: are its IVs and DVs valid, or are there important mismatches between them and the real-life variables they are intended to capture, or theoretical descriptions of those variables? Are the samples sufficiently large and representative? Does the study establish causation, or do its authors make inappropriate causal claims from correlational data?

Another critical visible factor that we have touched on is whether a study has been replicated, directly or conceptually. Many of the strongest articles in social psychology report more than one study, showing that an effect can be replicated, at least by the same team of researchers. Your confidence in any finding should increase if it has also been replicated by independent researchers, and your doubt should increase if it has not. Often, different studies produce different results, and these differences are hard to explain. This is partly because each study provides only a probabilistic measurement, or estimate, of an effect (such as the relationship between contact and prejudice). This estimate is subject to error as a result of variations we do not understand – essentially, random error. This is the same principle that applies to any measurement of a psychological variable: each time you measure prejudice, aggression or intelligence, the score will vary more or less randomly, and although the measure will produce a very specific score, it should not be read as an exact measurement of the true score. Rather, it has a margin of error around it. In sum, variability affects the results of studies, just as it does the measurements that are used in studies. This is one of the main reasons replication is so important (although not enough to guarantee safe conclusions: Fabrigar & Wegener, 2016; Francis, 2012; Schmidt & Oh, 2016).

Invisible factors

We have just seen that by reading social psychological research widely and carefully, it is possible to make a solid case that a given theory or study is flawed. While flaws in logic and methods may be readily visible, there are other factors that threaten the validity of theory and research that are much harder to 'see' directly. It is useful to be aware of them in order to maintain a healthy, sceptical attitude, and imagine specific alternative interpretations and ways of doing research.

Incentives

Social psychologists, like all researchers, work in an academic environment that offers them incentives (Spellman, 2015). Most are professionally obliged to publish, and are rewarded for publishing their research, especially, in high-prestige journals, such as *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *Psychological Science* and *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. It has always been easier to publish statistically significant findings than non-significant findings. Further, researchers may have built a reputation by putting forward a theory, and their career progression will not necessarily be suited by results that fail to support their theory. The editors and reviewers of journals may also prefer studies that produce significant results, or offer support for their preferred theories. These and other pressures may influence researchers to design their research in ways that unfairly favour their research hypothesis, or to engage in some of the questionable research and theoretical practices described below.

Biases

In this book, we will consider how a range of factors bias the way people think about themselves and their social worlds. Although social psychologists study these biases, this does not necessarily make them immune. One potential bias, for example, is that social psychologists – like academics in general, and perhaps especially in the social sciences – tend to have left-wing political views. Right-wingers (or conservatives) are massively underrepresented in the social psychological community (Cardiff & Klein, 2005; Inbar & Lammers, 2016; Klein & Stern, 2005; Tierney, 2011). Some scholars argue that this 'liberal skew' biases the selection of topics, the methods and even the findings and conclusions of research (Duarte et al., 2015). Others argue that mainstream social psychology (e.g., Gjorgjioska & Tomicic, 2019), or other areas such as evolutionary social psychology (e.g., Reicher, 2011), or specific theories about relationships between men and women (e.g., Rudman & Fetterolf, 2014, 2015), are subject to neoliberal or conservative bias, and serve to justify inequality. As you read different papers, you may become aware that the research appears to be informed by political values. If you are reading a theory or article that seems to be suffused with left-wing assumptions and values, it is worth asking 'How might a conservative thinker evaluate this research, and what conclusions would they draw from it?' Likewise, if you are reading a theory or article that seems friendlier to right-wing thinking, take the perspective of a left-wing thinker.

The file-drawer problem: also known as publication bias

Since researchers decide to withhold their non-significant results (for reasons we have just discussed), or because they find it difficult to get them accepted for publication by scientific journals, non-significant results are less likely to be published. As a result, they never see the light of the day, and languish in a literal or metaphorical 'file drawer' (Rosenthal, 1979). This means that people reading only the published research will get a misleading picture of research findings: one that suggests a given effect is larger than it is (see also Critical Focus box in Chapter 2).

Questionable research practices

Under the influence of incentives and biases, scientists, including social psychologists, have engaged in research practices that distort their results (Agnolie, Wicherts, Veldkamp, Albeiro & Cubelli, 2017; Fanelli, 2009; LeBel et al., 2013; Martinson, Anderson & De Vries, 2005). These are known as Questionable Research Practices, or QRPs (National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering & Institute of Medicine, 1992). Usually, they serve to increase the likelihood that results will be statistically significant, even if there is no 'true' effect.

One such practice is known as **HARKing** (Hypothesizing After Results are Known; Kerr, 1998). Odds are, if you drop a packet of dried spaghetti on your kitchen floor, you will see a clump or what appears to be some kind of pattern somewhere in the mess rather than an even distribution. HARKing is like saying, 'I knew that *exactly that* pattern would form'. Likewise, if you perform 20 independent statistical tests on your data, odds are that one of them will emerge as significant at $p < .05$. A $p < .05$ result that you did not predict is not necessarily impressive. It might be true, and may deserve investigation with further studies, but pretending that you predicted it in advance artificially increases how impressive it looks. Since some apparently significant pattern is always likely to emerge in a complex dataset, HARKing can lead to misleading conclusions.

HARKing A questionable research practice that stands for Hypothesizing After Results Are Known, where researchers artificially increase the importance and robustness of their findings by discovering a statistically significant result in their data, and writing about it as if they had predicted it in advance.

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Another questionable research practice is analysing results while data are being collected, and stopping when the analysis yields a $p < .05$ result. Or, to get to an originally planned sample size (say, 100 participants), finding that p is a bit more than .05, and 'topping up' your sample with a few more participants, in the hope that this causes p to drop below that threshold. This strategic **stopping** technique is wholly inappropriate: because of natural variation, at some point an apparently significant effect will probably emerge before disappearing again, even when no true effect exists. If you stop at exactly that moment, the $p < .05$ result is highly misleading. Stopping and HARKing are just two examples of ***p*-hacking** (Simmons, Nelson & Simonsohn, 2011): techniques applied by researchers, deliberately or otherwise, that artificially inflate the statistical significance of their results. Other techniques include omitting dependent variables that did not produce significant results, or running analyses different ways and reporting only the ones that return $p < .05$.

Stopping
A questionable research practice in which researchers analyse their data and then decide to either stop, or continue, collecting data according to whether the results are statistically significant at that point.

***p*-hacking**
Questionable research practices that artificially increase the likelihood of obtaining statistically significant results, and so distort the results of scientific research.

The replication crisis and reforms in social psychology

Concerns about questionable research practices, distortion and inflation of statistical significance have long surrounded science, and gathered fresh momentum with the publication of a searing review paper by the biomedical and statistical researcher Ioannidis (2005), entitled 'Why most published research findings are false'. In social psychology, these concerns were greatly heightened by the discovery of evidence of extensive fraud by a (seemingly) eminent social psychologist Deiderik Stapel (Aldhous, 2011), who was found to have fabricated data in numerous studies. This produced a concerted effort to try to understand the extent to which social psychology was affected by questionable research practices (e.g., Open Science Collaboration, 2015) and has involved, among other things, collaborative efforts by many research laboratories to replicate social psychological studies.

The Open Science Framework (2015) found that as few as one-third of selected psychological studies replicated, and fewer than that, around a quarter, of social psychological studies. That said, the studies were not selected at random, and replications were conducted in a single lab meaning that some – though not this much – variability in results could be expected, even if the originally observed results were true. A 'Many Labs' replication project examined 13 social psychological studies by replicating each one across multiple laboratories and aggregating results. This found that the results of 10 of the 13 studies could be replicated, two could not, and one was marginal (Klein et al., 2014). A second 'Many Labs' project attempted to replicate 28 social psychological findings and found that roughly half replicated. Further, the effect sizes

in the replication studies were generally smaller than in the original studies – though this does not necessarily indicate questionable research practices, and can arise from innocent statistical phenomena (Klein et al., 2018).

These results highlight the need to always be critical, and to entertain doubt, about the studies that you read. However, we firmly believe that they should not give you cause to think that most of the results and conclusions in this book are false. For the most part, we emphasize theories that have been supported by different kinds of studies by different labs.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Some social psychologists are more pessimistic about the state of the discipline, and some are much more optimistic, even doubting that there really was a crisis in social psychological research (e.g., Fiedler & Schwarz, 2016; Gilbert, King, Pettigrew & Wilson, 2016). For some research into social psychologists' attitudes to the replication crisis and the reforms that have followed, take a look at Washburn et al., 2018.

Some studies of questionable research practices in disciplines where the problems are similar – or worse – indicate that although these practices are relatively common, their effect on results is relatively small (e.g., Head, Holman, Lanfear, Kahn & Jennions, 2015). A comprehensive and rigorous analysis of the methods and results of social psychological research suggested that social psychological studies do produce reliable evidence – albeit not perfectly – and that their reliability may be improving after the implementation of reforms (Motyl et al., 2017). Where there have been particular concerns about failures to replicate major findings, we frequently note as much in this textbook, for example in the special features in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Many reforms have been proposed and implemented by social psychologists (e.g., Munafò et al., 2017; Nosek et al., 2015). They have also been built into the journals in which social psychologists publish, including leading journals for which we have served as associate editors, such as the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (Giner-Sorolla, 2016) and *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (Crandall, Leach, Robinson & West, 2018). These reforms mean that it is increasingly difficult to publish work that does not employ strong research practices.

As part of these reforms, social psychologists make increasing use of the **meta-analysis** of multiple studies. These can help to quantify the impact of the file-drawer problem, and to overcome the uncertainty and limitations of any one study. Another positive step is the more widespread use of larger sample sizes, calculations of 'statistical power' that enable researchers to determine that their sample sizes are fit for purpose, and greater awareness of the pitfalls of analysing data while they are being collected (Simmons et al., 2011).

Meta-analysis
A technique in which the results of many studies are combined and analysed together.

Other positive steps include the increasing adoption of open scientific practices. There are now portals such as the Open Science Framework (OSF: https://osf.io) in which researchers can lodge all of their materials, and within ethical constraints, their data, for anyone to see. Researchers can post a plan of their methods, hypotheses and data analyses before they start to collect their data. They are not always immediately public but are time-stamped and later become visible. This effectively prevents researchers from HARKing and several other questionable research practices, and also alerts researchers to research that may not have produced significant findings. A further positive development is the increasing ease with which non-significant findings can be published. Prestigious journals are now more open to publishing

non-significant findings, and may sometimes agree to publish research even before its results are known. New journals have sprung up that are open to the publication of non-significant findings, such as the *Journal of Comprehensive Results in Psychology*, *Collabra*, *Frontiers in Psychology* and *Plos One*. Authors are also increasingly able to make their papers publicly available before they are accepted for publication in journals, in repositories such as *PsyArXiv* and, indeed, *ResearchGate*.

These reforms demonstrate the *self-correcting* nature of science (Rutjens, Heine, Sutton & van Harreveld, 2018). False theories and false findings should eventually be rooted out by further research; practices that produce them should eventually be superseded by better practices. Social psychologists have put themselves at the vanguard of scientific reform by turning the tools of science upon itself. Specifically, they have used theories of motivation and decision making to understand how bias can influence science, and to quantify the seriousness of that influence. In our opinion, the reforms have made social psychologists more aware of the biases that may affect them and their colleagues, and more aware of good practices and pitfalls in research.

EXPLORING FURTHER

If you want to check whether the findings reported in an article have been replicated, either directly or conceptually, remember that you can use academic databases like Google Scholar to find the article and the articles that have subsequently cited it. You can search within these citing articles with the word 'replication' and you should be able to find relevant papers. Also, websites like Curate Science (curatescience.org) keep databases of attempts to replicate published findings; also check out the articles and websites of Open Science Collaboration (2015) and the Many Labs projects we referred to earlier.

In summary, critical thinking is a process that involves awareness of the limitations of your own knowledge and the uncertainty that surrounds any theory or finding. Using logic, creativity and your increasing knowledge of a topic, critical thinking means forming balanced conclusions about what we know and what remains to be found out. Important steps in critical thinking include:

- working out and searching for the information you need to solve a problem or answer a question
- prioritizing that information according to its quality and relevance
- framing the question or problem in different ways and from different perspectives
- being aware of, and imagining, alternative methods, findings and conclusions
- being aware of less visible threats to the validity of research and theory, including the role of incentives and biases
- assessing the relevance of theory and research to the real-world phenenoma they seek to address.

This may all seem daunting – but critical thinking is a skill that can be developed. Always bear in mind that the first step in your thinking is to be informed; to be able to understand and describe key theories and findings. This is the foundation for critical thinking and an essential part of your written work. How intensively critical your work is after that is a matter of what the task or essay requires you to do, your time and your (growing) ability.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided a broad introduction to the discipline of social psychology, outlining its history, topics and methods. You will have learned that:

- Social psychology is the study of how people think about, influence and relate to each other. It aims to further knowledge about the relationships between people and the social world, focusing on how people are influenced by the actual or implied presence of others.
- The majority of social psychologists adopt the scientific method, empirically putting theories to the test to make discoveries and refine theories. Critical social psychologists challenge the scientific approach, arguing that there are no universals of human nature.
- Social psychology is a relatively recent discipline, having emerged in its own right in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Early work was influenced by behaviourism, focusing on the impact of positive and negative events on behaviour.
- Social psychology has also been deeply influenced by social events such as the Holocaust, and this continues to this day. Also, the social backgrounds of the scholars themselves have strongly influenced the development of social psychology.
- Much of social psychology focuses on real-world questions and issues. Because of this, many social psychological findings are seen as 'common sense' – a result of what is known as the hindsight bias or the 'I knew it all along' effect. Perhaps also because social psychological findings can be intuitive, people see themselves as 'lay social psychologists'. The key difference between laypeople and social psychologists is that the latter devise theories to answer questions scientifically. Doing social psychology requires the generation of research questions and hypotheses that are tested using a variety of methods and critical thinking.
- Although most social psychologists adopt the scientific method, others have argued that hypothesis testing leads researchers to think less about the social context and so social psychology becomes less about social issues. In the 1970s, what was viewed as a 'crisis' in social psychology led some researchers to put the 'social' back into the discipline. This led to the development of critical social psychology, which gives more attention to social contexts and people's interactions with others.
- Social psychologists have a wide variety of research 'tools' or methods at their disposal. Once they have formulated a research question, they need to choose whether to conduct a quantitative investigation, a qualitative study, or to use both methods. Quantitative methods include surveys and questionnaires, and experiments. Qualitative methods include thematic analysis, conversational analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis. Methods common to both approaches include observations, case studies and archival studies.
- There are several issues to consider in social psychological research. For example, how participants are sampled is important and, ideally, samples should be random in experimental research. A measure should be reliable, such that it brings about consistent results. Also, it should be valid, in that it measures what it is supposed to be measuring. When conducting a study, it is also important to consider if the findings are statistically significant, or determining the probability that the finding of interest could have occurred by chance.
- Another key distinction in social psychological research is that between basic research (focusing on fundamental questions at the heart of human nature), and applied research (applying social psychological findings to social problems or issues).
- Cultural issues are important in social psychology and it cannot be assumed that all people think and act in the same way. 'Western' social psychology often ignores key cultural differences between people – such as individualism and collectivism – that determine social outcomes.

- Social psychologists must also conduct their work ethically, that is, they must carry out their research with the safety and privacy of participants in mind.
- Social psychology has close links with many other sub-disciplines of psychology, such as cognitive, clinical and personality psychology. It also has close relationships with disciplines outside psychology, such as biology, neuroscience, sociology, social anthropology and economics.
- Social psychologists disseminate their research primarily through publications in scientific journals. However, they also publish book chapters, present their work in talks, and are making increasing use of social networking opportunities.
- Critical thinking is an essential skill in social psychology that is associated with creativity and can be developed through instruction and practice. It involves imagining alternative theories, methods and conclusions, and appraising the strengths, weakness and relevance of theory and research.
- Over the last decade, social psychology has experienced a new 'crisis' of confidence about the robustness or replicability of research. This has led to several reforms to the way social psychological research is conducted and published.

In Chapter 2, we begin our journey into the specific topic areas of social psychology, starting with the social self – the study of how people understand who they are.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. Critical thinking and weighing up evidence is crucial to social psychology. Explain, with examples, why this is the case.
2. Imagine that you are designing a study to examine media representations of gender roles over the past 30 years. Design a study that would enable you to do so and explain and justify your choice of research methods.
3. Sampling is a crucial issue in social psychology. Explain, with examples, why in some situations it is acceptable to test hypotheses using White undergraduate participants, and why sometimes it is not.

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources, including videos and self-test multiple choice questions, to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

Allport, G.W. (1954a). The historical background of modern social psychology. In G. Lindzey (Ed.), *Handbook of social psychology* (vol. 1, pp. 3–56). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. For those of you who like to read the classics, this is Allport's history of social psychology, covering work up to the early 1950s.

Forshaw, M. (2012). *Critical thinking for psychology*. London: Wiley Blackwell. Introduces one of the key skills we have highlighted in this chapter: critical thinking. Explains what is expected from students, how to construct critical arguments and, using exercises, highlights the importance of critical thinking in psychology.

Judd, C.M., & Kenny, D.A. (2010). Data analysis in social psychology: Recent and recurring issues. In S.T. Fiske, D.T. Gilbert & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (5th ed, vol. 1, pp. 115–42). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons. Discusses some of the challenges that social psychologists face when they design studies and analyse data.

Reis, H.T., & Gosling, S.D. (2010). Social psychological methods outside the laboratory. In S.T. Fiske, D.T. Gilbert & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (5th ed, vol. 1, pp. 82–114). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons. Goes into more depth on some of the alternative methods to studying social behaviour in laboratory settings.

Ross, L., Lepper, M., & Ward, A. (2010). History of social psychology: Insights, challenges, and contributions to theory and application. In S.T. Fiske, D.T. Gilbert & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (5th ed, vol. 1, pp. 3–50). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons. Readable summary of the history of social psychology, highlighting some of the key challenges that have faced the discipline over the years.

Stainton Rogers, W. (2011). *Social psychology*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press. A unique textbook because it presents a strong emphasis on critical social psychology and qualitative research. Stainton Rogers is known as one of the 'founding mothers' of critical psychology.

Willing, C., & Stainton Rogers, W. (2017). (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology*. London: Sage. This handbook covers the qualitative methods with emphasis on practical examples.

Wilson, T.D., Aronson, E., & Carlsmith, K. (2010). The art of laboratory experimentation. In S.T. Fiske, D.T. Gilbert & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (5th ed, vol. 1, pp. 51–81). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons. Comprehensive overview and discussion of the art of conducting social psychological work in laboratory experiments.

PART

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CHAPTER 2 THE SOCIAL SELF: UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES

In this chapter we cover the important social psychological concept of the self. We outline what the self is, what it is for and how it defines what we think, feel and do. We discuss the key social psychological theories of the self, the motives that influence how we see ourselves, and some of the cross-cultural differences in the self-concept. By the end of this chapter, you will have a comprehensive understanding of this key topic in social psychology.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Self-knowledge and the self-concept
- Self-awareness
- Theories of self
- Self-esteem
- Self-presentation
- How accurate is our self-knowledge?
- Motivated social cognition and the self
- Culture and the self

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Who are you? If someone asks you this question you will be able to generate a long list of traits and identities that define how you see yourself. For example, you may say that you are female, a university student, politically liberal, a daughter or a Muslim, among many other characteristics that together make you who you are. You may think about where you live or where you are from and consider yourself to be British, Irish or Australian. You may think about your daily activities and define yourself as a musician, feminist or someone who likes sport. The list is endless and yet each of these aspects of the self is crucial to our sense of who we are. Further, at some point, you will think about who you *think* you are. Most people ask themselves questions like: 'I think I am a musician (or a feminist or someone who likes sport), but how confident am I about that?' Humans have a capacity to reflect on their own thinking (Lea & Kiley-Worthington, 1996), and this ability means that people are perpetually rethinking and redefining themselves.

Photo by Elijah M. Henderson on Unsplash

The self is a fundamental aspect of being human and it is not only personal, but also intrinsically and intensely social. This is why the self is such an important topic in social psychology and has been a key focus of research for many years. The concept of the self is social because understanding the self is crucial to social life. Knowing who we are allows us to know what we should think, how we should feel and how we should behave. It helps us to interact with others, organize our experiences, promote our interests and regulate our behaviour. Our sense of self therefore defines not only what we think of ourselves, but also much of our social behaviour.

There is another sense in which the self is social: we have a social relationship with the self. That is, we have beliefs about our traits, relationships, strengths and weaknesses, much as we have beliefs about other people. We like or dislike aspects of ourselves, much as we like or dislike aspects of other people. Further, as we shall see, we can help or handicap ourselves by doing things that boost or sabotage our chances of success. We punish ourselves when we feel we have done something wrong (e.g., Bastian, Jetten & Fasoli, 2011; Nelissen, 2012; de Vel-Palumbo, Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2018) and we sometimes view ourselves as if from the outside – as if we were another person.

The complex, social nature of the self was one of the earliest insights of social psychology. James (1890) wrote that selfhood is characterized by a fundamental duality such that a person experiences being both 'I' and 'me'. In 'I' mode, they are an experiencing, acting subject, and as 'me', they are the object of their own perceptions. Cooley (1902) took this insight further by proposing the notion of the 'looking-glass self'. For Cooley and other **symbolic interactionists** (e.g., Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934), a basic task of social life is to see ourselves from the outside, more or less as others see us, so that a person's developing sense of 'me' is attuned to the beliefs, expectancies and needs of others. Mead (1934) argued that when we evaluate ourselves, we normally adopt the perspective of the 'generalized other' – a nonspecific person who embodies the norms of our society and of those who matter to us. This view of ourselves helps us to be guided by social norms, to help us so we can influence others and avoid being punished or banished. For the symbolic interactionists, therefore, being aware of ourselves is a crucial part of being able to control ourselves.

Symbolic interactionism Researchers from this perspective investigate how people create meaning through social interaction, how they construct and represent the self and how they define situations when they are with others.

The symbolic interactionists did not typically frame their ideas in ways that were easily tested using scientific methods. However, their ideas have been hugely influential in the social psychological study of the self, including most of the research we explore in this chapter. They have been translated into testable ideas, and have largely held up in the century or so since they were first conceived. But how do people become self-aware? How does this awareness help people to evaluate the self in order to reflect on who they are and how to change? What are its emotional consequences? These are the more specific questions we set out to answer in this chapter. We focus first on what is known as the 'self-concept'. Here, we consider what the self is made up of, what it is for and how our concept of self influences what we do. Then, we consider core theories concerning how the self-concept is formed and how people become self-aware. Next, we consider the construct of self-esteem and how our feelings about ourselves influence how we cope with life situations. Moving on, we then discuss the role of motivations in how we perceive ourselves, in particular focusing on the core motivation to enhance and feel good about the self. We also consider some of the cultural differences in the study of self. By the end of this chapter, you will have a clear understanding of what the self is and what it is for.

SELF–KNOWLEDGE AND THE SELF–CONCEPT

The **self-concept** is defined as the complete set of beliefs that people have about themselves, which form their understanding of who they are (Markus, 1977; Markus, Hamill & Sentis, 1987). For example, one may see oneself as feminine, sensitive, introverted, hard-working, creative, talkative and so on. The self-concept has many distinct components for each individual and these components, which together form a person's overall self-concept, are known as **self-schemas** or different *dimensions* of the self. Of course, people's self-schemas are different and therefore people's overall self-concepts are unique – not everyone thinks of themselves as feminine, sensitive or introverted, for example. People are different and perceive themselves as such. Also, some self-schemas are particularly important to people and others are not. Markus (1977) argued that if people feel that a particular dimension is important to them, think that they are higher or lower than most people on that dimension, and are certain that the opposite is not true of them, they can be described as *self-schematic* on that dimension. For example, if a person feels that they are extroverted, are positive that they are not introverted, and being extroverted is important to them, then they are self-schematic on the dimension of extroversion. If a dimension is unimportant to a person's sense of self, the person is said to be *self-aschematic* on that dimension. Thus, people have a complex set of important schemas that form their overall self-concept.

Self-concept The complete set of beliefs people have about themselves.

Self-schemas Beliefs about oneself that help people process self-relevant information.

Self-schemas are important guiding factors that determine how people *think* they should think, feel and act in specific situations (Markus, 1977). Different contexts activate different aspects of the self. For example, for a person who is self-schematic on extroversion, that schema is

likely to determine how they believe they should think, feel or behave at a social gathering – and these perceptions will be different for people who have the self-schema that they are introverted. A person who is aschematic on this dimension may be different yet again. This function of self-schemas was illustrated in a study by Markus (1977), who asked participants first to rate themselves on the traits of dependence and independence. From these ratings, participants were identified as either self-schematic for dependence or independence, or aschematic on both traits. Participants were then asked to complete a reaction time task where they read words on a screen. The words were either associated with independence (e.g., 'assertive', 'self-confident') or dependence (e.g., 'conforming', 'cautious') and participants were asked to press a button for 'me' or 'not me', depending on whether or not they felt that the trait was characteristic of them. Findings revealed that participants who were self-schematic on independence or dependence more quickly identified the words associated with their schemas, compared to those who were aschematic on both dimensions (Figure 2.1). Those who were self-schematic on one of the dimensions were also more able to recall experiences that demonstrated their dependence or independence. Participants' self-schemas were, therefore, useful in guiding their thoughts about themselves.

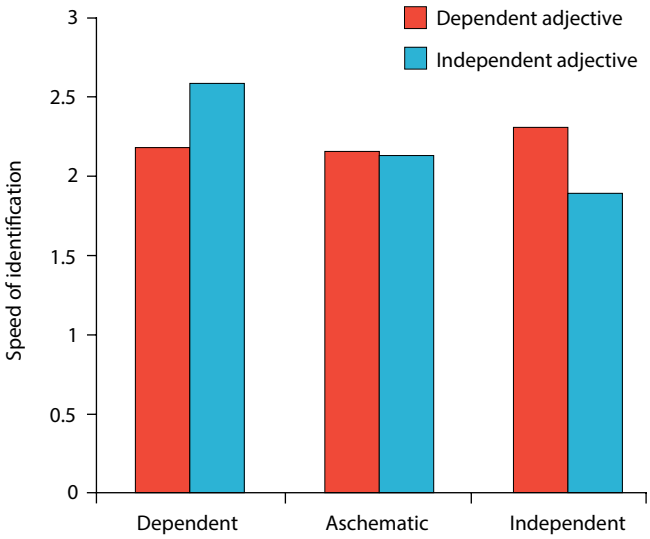

FIGURE 2.1 Self-schematic versus aschematic individuals
Participants who are self-schematic on a trait (in this case, independence or dependence) more quickly identified the words that were characteristic of them, compared to participants who were aschematic on both dimensions.

Source: Data from Markus (1977)

Self-schemas can influence aspects of one's daily life too. People who are weight conscious are a good example of this (Markus et al., 1987). Such people, for whom body weight is a significant daily concern, may experience visits to the supermarket, reading fashion magazines and shopping for clothing differently than those who are aschematic on that dimension. Such activities may trigger thoughts about the self in schematic individuals but be of little consequence for those who are aschematic. Such a self-schema can lead to body image preoccupations, in which people excessively monitor their weight and appearance, and even evaluate their worth according to their body shape (Altabe & Thompson, 1996: see also the concept of contingent self-esteem, below). This is a particular concern for women, who are more, although not uniquely, prone to body image concerns. Eating disorders are an extreme, but all too common manifestation of these concerns (Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005; Strelan & Mehaffy, 2003). This illustrates how self-schemas' ability to organize thought and motivate action means that they can become all-consuming and lead to counterproductive behaviours.

People even have schemas of their potential future self (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Sentis, 1982). These reflect our desired selves (e.g., happy, successful) and feared selves (e.g., unhappy, unsuccessful) and highlight the importance of self-schemas in determining how we feel about ourselves – if one self-schema makes us feel unhappy, then we might focus more on self-schemas that make us feel good. For example, if we feel self-schematic for being disorganized and find this aspect of the self disappointing, then we may choose to focus instead on our conception of self as being creative, because this makes us feel better and compensates for aspects of the self we think are lacking (Linville, 1985, 1987). It is important, therefore, that people have multiple self-schemas so that there are always 'spare' schemas to focus on when they feel they fall short on other dimensions. Indeed, Linville (1985) found that low self-complexity (not many roles, more overlap) predicts illness, whereas high self-complexity (lots of roles, little overlap) does not. High self-complexity can therefore act as a buffer for stress (Brown, 2018).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Think of your own self-schemas. What dimensions are important to you? What dimension are you extreme on? Write down a list of schematic and aschematic dimensions. Put everything together and get an overall idea of your self-concept. Compare your self-concept with that of a friend's. How are your self-concepts similar? How are they different? Which of the traits and features you have listed most clearly define 'who you are'?

Multiple role theory Theory asserting that it is beneficial for a person's health and wellbeing to have multiple self-identities.

Priming Exposure to stimuli that activate a mental representation of a particular concept, value, goal or object.

This claim is at the heart of **multiple role theory** (e.g., Powell & Greenhaus, 2010; Thoits, 1983), according to which it is psychologically beneficial for people to have multiple identities (e.g., sibling, student, friend, sports team member). Each role opens up new experiences, opportunities for social interaction, pleasure and personal growth, but also the risk of failure and frustration (see Figure 2.2). When one identity is creating negative feelings, having other identities enables a person to continue to grow and enjoy life. At the same time, however, self-schemas that are too well partitioned or too extreme can be problematic. For example, if some self-schemas are very positive and others are very negative, **priming** the schemas can have extreme effects on mood. Sometimes, it may be best to have less compartmentalized or more moderate self-schemas, so that priming them will not lead to extreme mood swings.

It is also important that people attach positive meaning to these schemas. Some research on multiple role theory suggests that the *quality* (in terms of happiness, satisfaction and optimism) rather than the *quantity* of roles is important for psychological wellbeing (Baruch & Barnett, 1986). When people experience conflict between roles or self-schemas, they tend to experience

Blend Images - RF/JGI/Jamie Grill

FIGURE 2.2 Multiple role theory According to multiple role theory, it is beneficial for people to have multiple identities. If particular self-schemas can be aligned with each other, people are likely to prosper. However, when self-schemas are seen as being in conflict with each other, as is often the case for working mothers, people can experience distress.

distress (Burke, 1991; Meyer, 2003). It may be difficult, for example, for many women to see themselves both as a great mother and a dedicated worker. If people's schemas can be aligned with each other, for example if working women think of themselves as a positive role model for their children, they are likely to prosper (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, 2016; Powell & Greenhaus, 2010).

The need for the various parts of the self-concept to 'gel' is at the heart of **self-concept clarity** (Campbell et al., 1996). Self-concept clarity refers to the extent to which self-schemas are clearly and confidently defined, consistent with each other, and stable across time. It is important that one's self-beliefs and identities are clearly defined in one's own mind, that they cohere, rather than clash with each other, and that they do not change rapidly or unpredictably. Self-concept clarity enables people to see themselves as having many facets, but also as individuals, with a strong, unified self. Many of the projects in our lives are long term – as in our closest friendships and romantic relationships, or our careers. To succeed in these projects, we need to act consistently. It is not helpful if people's perceptions of their strengths, values, priorities and goals change from day to day, or are inconsistent with each other.

Self-concept clarity The extent to which self-schemas are clearly and confidently defined, consistent with each other, and stable across time.

One of the benefits of self-concept clarity is that it bolsters self-esteem (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1996). It is also related to subjective wellbeing – a blanket term for the experience of psychological wellness, incorporating variables such as satisfaction with life, freedom from anxiety and sadness, and the experience of positive mood (Campbell et al., 1996). Correlational research suggests that self-concept clarity helps people deal with daily negative events (Lavallee & Campbell, 1995) and being treated unjustly by others (De Cremer & Sedikides, 2005), is associated with more open communication with others (van Dijk et al., 2014), increases job satisfaction and commitment to one's work (McIntyre, Mattingly, Lewandowski Jr. & Simpson, 2014), and helps people cope with relationship breakups (Slotter, Gardner & Finkel, 2010).

There is also experimental evidence that self-concept clarity not only correlates with psychological wellbeing, but also actively bolsters it. For example, Lewandowski, Nardone and Raines (2010) had participants undergo a procedure that either strengthened or weakened self-concept clarity. Participants assigned to a self-concept clarity condition were asked to list the times they acted in ways that were consistent with three adjectives they had earlier indicated were descriptive of them. For example, if they had earlier said they were introverted, they were asked to describe times they had acted in an introverted way. In contrast, participants assigned to a self-concept confusion condition were asked to list the times they had acted in ways that were consistent with adjectives they had already indicated were *not* descriptive of them. For example, if they said they were not open-minded, they were asked to recount the times they had acted in an open-minded way. Participants in the clarity condition, compared to the confusion condition, reported increased satisfaction with, and commitment to, their romantic relationships. Unfortunately, there was no baseline condition in which participants' self-concepts were not manipulated; therefore we cannot say whether an increase in clarity, compared to baseline levels, was beneficial to relationship satisfaction and commitment, or whether an increase in confusion was harmful to it. Either way, research results like this highlight the social function of the self. Having a clear, coherent understanding of ourselves (versus a confused one) helps us cope more effectively with the stresses, injustices and rejections thrown up by our social lives. It also gives us the confidence and motivation to commit to, and enjoy, our relationships with others.

Where does self-concept clarity come from? The experiment by Lewandowski et al. (2010) shows that self-concept clarity is not only a personality variable. It is true that, averaged over time, you will generally have higher self-concept clarity than some people and lower self-concept clarity than others. Nonetheless, your self-concept clarity may also change somewhat

from day to day, in response to situational factors. Research has cast a good deal of light on the sources of self-concept clarity. In a **diary study**, Nezlek and Plesko (2001) had over 100 participants complete a self-concept clarity scale developed by Campbell et al. (1996), twice a week, for up to 10 weeks. They found that self-concept clarity fluctuated from day to day. On some days, participants had a clearer, more coherent understanding of who they were than on other days. In particular, they found that the self-concept was notably less clear on days in which participants experienced bad events. This finding was mediated by negative mood and reduced self-esteem, which is a concept we discuss at length shortly, but generally refers to feeling good about oneself. Ritchie, Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt and Gidron (2011) also found that stressful events reduced self-concept clarity, which in turn was associated with negative changes to psychological wellbeing. Thus, self-concept clarity may help explain why stressful events can be so damaging to mental health: namely, by undermining the clarity with which you understand who you are. When we put all these studies on self-concept clarity together, the relationship between self-concept clarity and self-esteem appears to be bidirectional. It is easier to feel good about yourself when you are clear about who you are. It is also easier to feel that you know who you are when you feel good about yourself. The discrepancy between a person's actual self-esteem and their desired self-esteem also appears to be an important predictor of self-concept clarity (DeMarree & Rios, 2014). In particular, when there is a significant gap between actual and desired self-esteem (typically for people with lower levels of self-esteem), self-concept clarity is reduced.

Diary study A research method that requires participants to keep track of their daily activities or events for a particular period of time.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Complete Campbell et al.'s (1996) scale of self-concept clarity in the table below. At the end of the task, you will need to calculate your total score for the 12 items. This is where it gets a bit more complicated. You will notice that some of the items are marked with an asterisk (*), indicating they will need to be reverse scored. Social psychologists do this in their scales to make sure that participants think about their responses. If all items indicated higher levels of self-concept clarity, for example, participants might not think properly about their responses and so respond similarly every time. Reverse scored items are a feature of a good scale. For example, you might be asked to rate your agreement with the following statements:

Social psychology is:

Boring	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Interesting**
Relevant	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Irrelevant**

An answer of 5 to both questions probably means that the participant did not properly read or think about the questions. If the participant has responded appropriately, reverse scoring the second item means that, together, the participant's mean response is an index of how positively they feel about social psychology.

Reverse coding means that the number the participant answers simply becomes its reverse, that is, a score of 1 becomes a 5, a score of 2 becomes a 4 and so on. You can do this for a 5-point scale like this one by simply subtracting the number you scored from 6. Reversing the items that would otherwise indicate low self-concept clarity (e.g., 'My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another') means that all items indicate increasing levels of self-concept clarity. In Campbell et al.'s (1996) study, the mean total was approximately 40. What is your score? If you score more than 40, then your self-concept is clearer that most.

Reverse scoring A technique used in questionnaires to ensure that participants think about their responses.

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another. *	1	2	3	4	5
On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion. *	1	2	3	4	5
I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am. *	1	2	3	4	5
Sometimes I feel that I am not really the person I appear to be. *	1	2	3	4	5
When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like. *	1	2	3	4	5
I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality.	1	2	3	4	5
Sometimes I think I know other people better than I know myself. *	1	2	3	4	5
My beliefs about myself seem to change frequently. *	1	2	3	4	5
If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day to another. *	1	2	3	4	5
Even if I wanted to, I don't think I could tell someone what I'm really like. *	1	2	3	4	5
In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am.	1	2	3	4	5
It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don't really know what I want. *	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Campbell et al. (1996). Copyright © 1996 by American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

Recently, researchers have also discussed the notion of the **true self**. This refers to the characteristics that make a person who they are, deep down (Strohminger, Knobe & Newman, 2017). In other words, some parts of the self-concept are essential for making a person who they are, but others are not. Some aspects of the self are just for 'show' and are therefore peripheral to the true self, but without the essential aspects of the self, the person would simply not be who they really are. Strohminger et al. (2017) argued that moral traits are central to the true self. That is, people need to view themselves as moral and good. However, the true self also comprises emotions, desires and hidden mental states. Interestingly, people's positive feelings about their true selves appear universal. That is, independent of culture, people seem to need to view the true self as moral and good.

True self
Characteristics of the self-concept that are essential for making a person who they are.

SELF–AWARENESS

The self is a fundamental aspect of people's lives and, as we mentioned earlier, people constantly redefine themselves as they consider what they think, feel and do. However, this is not to say that people are constantly thinking about the self, that is, we are not always aware of 'who we are'.

Self-awareness
The psychological state of being aware of one's characteristics, feelings and behaviours.

Self-awareness is the psychological state of being aware of one's characteristics, feelings and behaviours, or the awareness of oneself as unique. In this section, we will discuss how an awareness of self develops, the different types of self-awareness and the neurological basis of self-awareness.

Development of self-awareness

Awareness of the self is not something people are born with. Instead, it develops throughout infancy and childhood, appearing to begin at around age 18 months. In one study demonstrating the development of self-awareness, Lewis and Brooks-Gunn (1978) placed a spot of rouge (red makeup) on the noses of infants aged between 9–12 months and sat them in front of a mirror. These young babies looked at their mirror image with no recognition and no effort to touch the rouge on their own noses. The authors argued that this was because the babies were not aware that the image in the mirror was their own, and they had no concept of self-awareness. However, children around 18 months of age who performed the same task made a concerted effort to rub the rouge from their own noses. It was argued that they did so because they had developed the understanding that the image in the mirror was their own and they understood that the rouge was on their own faces. Thus, they were in the process of developing a sense of self-awareness.

Humans are not the only animals who can recognize themselves in the mirror. For example, Reiss and Marino (2001) demonstrated that dolphins stopped by a mirror for longer if they had a black spot on their noses. Further, Gallup (1977) showed that great apes (gorillas, orangutans and chimpanzees) were capable of self-recognition, using mirrors to help groom themselves, make faces and pick food from their teeth. More recent research suggests that rhesus monkeys can also recognize themselves in a mirror, despite it being long thought they were unable to do this (Rajala, Reininger, Lancaster & Populin, 2010; Toda & Platt, 2015). Thus, while people are predisposed to develop self-recognition at an early age, many animals also seem to have a sense of self.

EXPLORING FURTHER

The 'mirror test' of self-awareness has had its critics (e.g., Bekoff, 2003; De Veer & van den Bos, 1999). What do you think might be its shortcomings? It may help to break this general question down into two parts. First, does failing the mirror test really show that a person or animal lacks self-awareness? For example, can you think of reasons, other than a lack of self-awareness, why a person or animal might 'fail' the mirror test? Second, does passing the mirror test really show that a child or animal has a fully developed sense of self-awareness? Monkeys and apes can pass it, so what do 'we' normally have that 'they' probably lack? Also, think about other ways in which it might be possible to test if an animal is self-aware. For one example, see Horowitz (2017) who designed a self-awareness test for dogs which was based on smell – an 'olfactory mirror'. Using this test, Horowitz established that dogs were able to distinguish between their own smell and that of another dog. Is this a fairer test of animal self-awareness?

Public self-awareness
Awareness of the public aspects of the self and how these aspects may be seen by others.

Public and private self-awareness

It is generally understood that there are two types of self-awareness, depending on whether the person is more aware of aspects of the self that are public or more aware of aspects of the self that are private. First, **public self-awareness** occurs when a person becomes aware of the public aspects of the self and how they could be judged by other people (Buss,

1980; Carver & Scheier, 1981; Duval & Wicklund, 1972). For example, think of a time when you were concerned about what others thought of you – maybe giving a presentation at university, singing to an audience or playing sport in front of a crowd. In such situations, your public self-awareness was activated. In these contexts, people are sometimes concerned about what others think because they are apprehensive about being judged or evaluated (Prentice-Dunn & Rogers, 1982). Nobody wants to be evaluated negatively by other people because this can lead to lowered levels of self-esteem and increased nervousness in future social interactions (e.g., Brockner, 1979; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Therefore, public self-awareness can sometimes be debilitating and lead people to be too concerned with their outward behaviours. On the upside, however, it is public self-awareness that leads people to adhere to norms and societal standards of behaviour in specific situations. For example, if others are watching and a person needs to dispose of rubbish, they are more likely to do so in an appropriate way because their public self-awareness leads to concerns about being evaluated by onlookers who might not be so impressed by littering (e.g., Froming, Allen & Jensen, 1985; Prentice-Dunn & Rogers, 1982).

This state of public self-awareness is usually temporary. That is, people become more publicly self-aware because of a specific situation they are in. However, it is also the case that some people are more publicly self-aware than others in a chronic or dispositional sense. Specifically, people who are high in what is known as **public self-consciousness** are more chronically concerned about how they look and how they are evaluated by others (Fenigstein, Scheier & Buss, 1975). Such people are more generally inclined to follow rules and norms for fear of being negatively evaluated by others if they deviate from these standards of behaviour (Prentice-Dunn & Rogers, 1982). Publicly self-conscious individuals are more likely to be concerned with their physical appearance and are more likely to judge others on their looks (e.g., Fenigstein, 1979; Fenigstein et al., 1975; Miller, Murphy & Buss, 1981; Striegel-Moore, Silberstein & Rodin, 1993). Recent research suggests that public self-consciousness influences the way people behave online. For example, Lee-Won, Shim, Joo and Park (2014) found that people high in public self-consciousness were more likely to present themselves positively on Facebook, for example by using a profile picture that depicts themselves smiling, having fun or hanging out with friends (see also Shim, Lee-Won & Park, 2016).

Public self-consciousness
Chronic public self-awareness and concern about how one looks and is evaluated by others.

These context-specific and more general concerns about public evaluation are echoed in the private sphere. **Private self-awareness** refers to the psychological state where an individual is aware of the private, personal aspects of the self (Buss, 1980; Carver & Scheier, 1981; Duval & Wicklund, 1972). For example, a person may think about a time when they helped a friend who was in trouble. Contemplating this situation may make them become privately self-aware of their kindness. Or, a person may think of a time when they stole something and felt shameful and aware of their deceit. Being privately self-aware can have positive and negative consequences for people's feelings about themselves. Also, if a person feels good at the time, reflecting on the self may increase the extent to which they focus on positive aspects, thus further improving their feeling of positivity (Scheier & Carver, 1977). On the downside, however, if a person does not feel good to begin with, reflecting on the self may increase the extent to which they focus on the more negative or problematic aspects of the self. This potentially depresses mood further (Mor & Winquist, 2002; Scheier & Carver, 1977).

Private self-awareness
Awareness of private, personal aspects of the self.

In a classic study, Scheier and Carver (1977) uncovered evidence of this tendency. They asked research participants to read a series of positive statements (e.g., 'I feel happy') out loud, while in another condition, people read out negative statements (e.g., 'I feel empty'). Reading positive statements about themselves led to feelings of happiness, whereas reading negative statements had the opposite effect, leading to feelings of sadness. Crucially, participants who looked at their image in a mirror while performing the task (a manipulation of private self-awareness) became

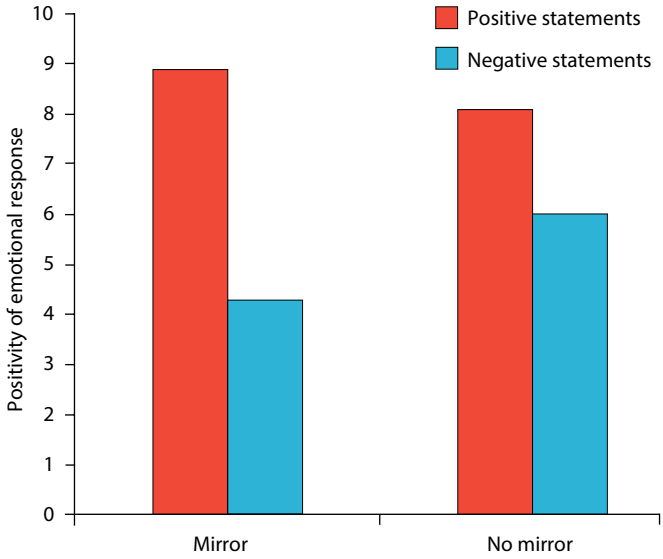

FIGURE 2.3 The effect of private self-awareness on emotional responses to reading positive and negative statements

Emotional responses become exaggerated (more positive/more negative) under conditions where participants are asked to perform the experimental task while looking in a mirror.

Source: Data from Scheier and Carver (1977)

more extreme in their emotional responses to the task than participants who were not asked to look at themselves in the mirror (see Figure 2.3).

Other studies have shown that private self-awareness can be activated in situations that are emotionally arousing. For example, Scheier and Carver (1980) asked participants to write an essay while either being placed in front of a mirror or not. The essay was to be written in such a way that was inconsistent with the participants' pre-existing attitudes (a counterattitudinal essay). This is a manipulation that is commonly used to generate a state of negative arousal – the rationale being that writing an essay that goes against one's attitudes means that one's behaviours are inconsistent with these attitudes. This creates a state of *cognitive dissonance* (see Chapter 4) and people often try to resolve the inconsistency by changing their attitudes. However, findings from Scheier and Carver's study revealed that the participants who were placed in front of a mirror – and were therefore more privately self-aware – exhibited less attitude change in their essays than the participants who were not placed in front of a mirror. Awareness of one's attitudes made participants adhere to them more rather than changing their minds. In essence, they were 'true' to themselves.

TIME TO REFLECT

It is perfectly plausible that being in front of a mirror increases your self-awareness. But why else might it amplify your emotional reactions to reading out statements like 'I feel happy', or 'I feel empty'? Hint: think about the facial expressions that most people would pull while reading out such statements. It might help to write a list of, say, five positive statements like 'I feel happy'. Say them in front of a mirror, and while not in front of a mirror. What differences can you observe?

The ability of mirrors to arouse private self-awareness has another striking implication – being in front of a mirror can make us more moral. In one demonstration of this effect, Diener and Wallbom (1976) had participants take a test of cognitive ability in which they had to solve anagrams (e.g., 'cop go shyly' is an anagram of 'psychology'). Each participant was left in a room to solve anagrams and was given strict instructions that, although they were unsupervised, they should stop after the allotted time and await the return of the experimenter. In the self-awareness condition, participants were facing a free-standing mirror and, to crank up private self-awareness, were also played a tape recording of their own voice. In the control condition, participants sat to the side of the mirror and listened to a tape of someone else's voice. The dependent variable was whether participants elected to cheat, continuing to work after their allotted time was over. As predicted, participants in the self-aware condition were significantly less likely to cheat (see also Vallacher & Solodky, 1979).

This finding is consistent with the idea that private self-awareness makes our personal values salient. Because we feel that cheating is wrong, we are less likely to cheat when we can observe ourselves doing so. As we shall see in Chapter 10, a lack of self-awareness has been blamed for the mob mentality that contributes to rioting, looting and intergroup atrocities such as

lynchings. As the crowd gets bigger, all else being equal, the personal moral standards of each individual become less salient. As a result, so does the severity of the violence meted out to victims and the incidents of antisocial behaviour. Of course, many other factors contribute to behaviours such as riots and crowd behaviour, as we will learn in Chapter 10 when we discuss the concept of deindividuation, but the mirror study of Diener and Wallbom (1976), in its small way, creates a situation that is diametrically opposed to a lynch mob.

This basic finding has been replicated and extended in several subsequent studies. For example, Beaman, Klentz, Diener and Svanum (1979) found that unsupervised children were less likely to steal extra sweets when placed in front of a mirror (see Figure 2.4). An interesting **boundary condition** was observed by Heine, Takemoto, Moskalenko, Lasaleta and Henrich (2008). They replicated the finding that North American participants were less likely to cheat in front of a mirror, but also found that putting a mirror in front of Japanese participants made no difference to their behaviour. Heine et al. reasoned that in an interdependent or 'collectivist' culture like Japan (see later in this chapter for a discussion of culture and self), people are more accustomed to seeing themselves as others see them. Thus, people in such cultures, to a greater degree than people from independent or 'individualistic' cultures, effectively carry a 'mirror in their heads' in which they can see how they appear to others.

Boundary condition A level of a third variable under which an otherwise observed effect is no longer observed. For example, being insulted by a stranger does not cause the usual annoyance if one is wearing earphones and cannot hear them. A boundary condition means we can expect an interaction effect – the relationship between two variables depends on the level of a third variable.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Can you think of other consequences of having such a mirror in the head? Heine et al.'s (2008) study focused on the effects of culture on responses to the mirror task – can you think of other factors that might influence how people respond to this task?

Like public self-awareness, some people are more privately self-aware in a chronic sense. People who are high in **private self-consciousness** are more likely to be consistent in their attitudes, are likely to experience more intense emotions, and are more accurate in their self-perceptions (Fenigstein, Scheier & Buss, 1975). And, like public self-consciousness, private self-consciousness also has positive and negative consequences. For example, it has been found that because privately self-conscious individuals are more aware of changes in their physiology, they are less likely to suffer stress-related illnesses because they notice health problems sooner (Mullen & Suls, 1982). However, because of this heightened self-awareness, people high in private self-consciousness are also more likely to suffer from depression than others because they are more likely to dwell on negative feelings (Mor & Winquist, 2002; Smith & Greenberg, 1981; Takishima-Lacasa, Higa-McMillan, Ebesutani, Smith & Chorpita, 2014).

Private self-consciousness Chronic private self-awareness and concern about private aspects of the self.

JUPITER

FIGURE 2.4 Stealing sweets Beaman et al. (1979) demonstrated that unsupervised children were less likely to steal sweets if they were made privately self-aware by being placed in front of a mirror.

EXPLORING FURTHER

To help you understand the different types of self-awareness and self-consciousness, draw up a table like the one below and list some examples of the positive and negative consequences of being high in each concept.

Concept	Positive consequences	Negative consequences
Public self-awareness		
Private self-awareness		
Public self-consciousness		
Private self-consciousness		

The biological basis of self-awareness

Evidence suggests that a specific part of the brain called the anterior cingulate cortex (Figure 2.5) is responsible for controlling and monitoring intentional behaviour among other complex social cognitive processes, such as processing information about the self (Kelley et al., 2002). This area, in the frontal lobe of the cerebral cortex, appears to be activated when people become self-aware (Kjaer, Nowak & Lou, 2002). Although this is probably not the only area associated with self-awareness, evidence that spindle cells in this part of the brain develop rapidly around 18 months of age also lends support to the importance of the anterior cingulate cortex in self-awareness. On the other hand, chronic self-awareness, enduring through time rather than being produced by a situation, appears to be associated with a different region of the brain, the medial frontoparietal networks, which are normally activated when people are engaged

Geoff B. Hall

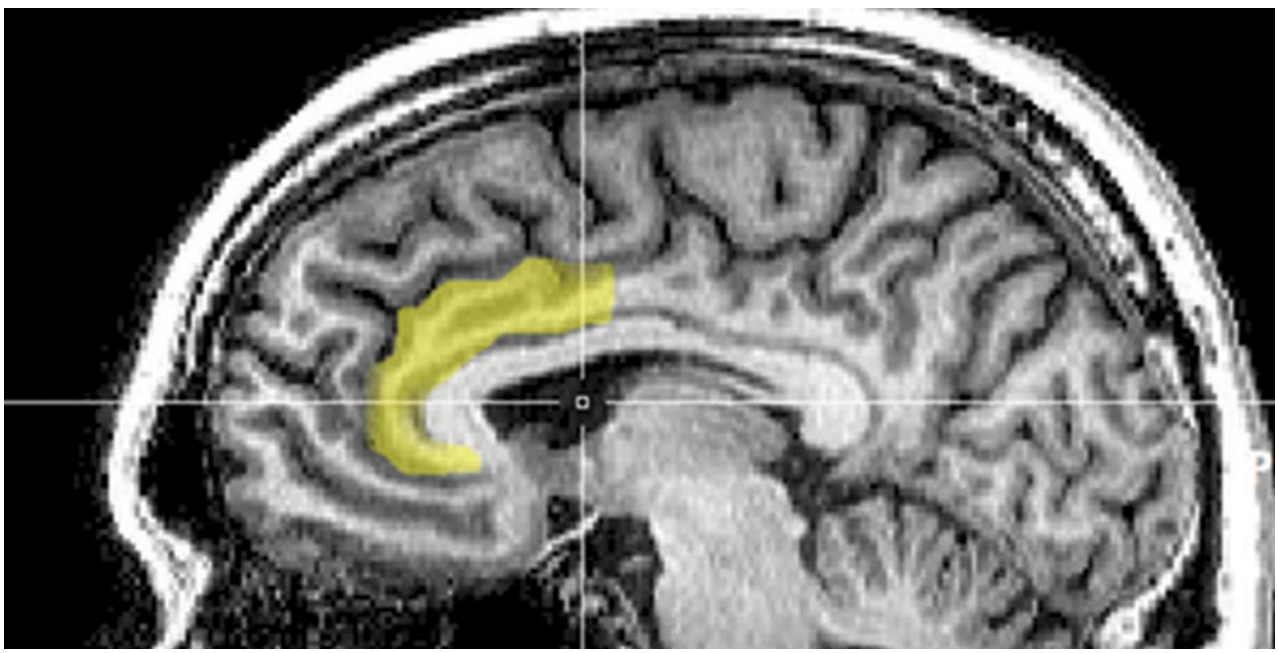

FIGURE 2.5 The anterior cingulate cortex The anterior cingulate cortex in the frontal lobe is thought to be responsible for processing information about the self.

Source: Geoff B Hall, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MRI_anterior_ cingulate.png

in self-focused, effortful processes (Eisenberger, Lieberman & Satpute, 2005). Thus, so far we lack a clear picture of whether different regions of the brain are specialized in self-awareness. To our knowledge, no study has yet been published attempting to distinguish brain regions associated with public versus private self-awareness.

THEORIES OF SELF

Now that we know how people develop a sense of self-awareness, what types of self-awareness exist, and something about the 'location' of self-awareness within the brain, we move on to consider some of the core theories of self. These theories address why people perceive themselves the way they do. As you read, you will notice that all these theories argue that people define the self in comparison to some standard. For example, self-perception theory argues that people learn about themselves through examining their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Self-discrepancy theory and the control theory of self-regulation argue that people can improve their self-concept by comparing it to their internal goals and standards. Regulatory focus theory proposes that people have distinct self-regulatory systems that are associated with their goals. Social comparison theory involves viewing the self compared to other people or the self at another time. Finally, the self-evaluation maintenance model explains how people are able to maintain positive self-esteem when they compare themselves to others. We now discuss these six theories.

Self-perception theory

Self-perception theory argues that people may learn about themselves by examining their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Of these three, behaviours are most important, however, because they are more objective and observable. Bem (1967, 1972) argued that people become aware of their own attitudes (and in a sense, who they are) by looking at what they do. In other words, people look at their own behaviours and infer aspects of the self from those behaviours. For example, a person may reflect on their behaviour of studying hard for an exam and, as a result, they may view themselves as hard-working and studious. Self-perception effects like this can also occur by just imagining behaving in a certain way. For example, Van Gyn, Wenger and Gaul (1990) split a sample of runners into two groups. One group trained on exercise bikes, while the other did not. Furthermore, half the participants in each group were asked to imagine themselves training and the other half were not asked to imagine themselves training. Results revealed, as predicted, that the subsequent performance of groups who had trained on the exercise bikes was superior. However, those who had simply imagined themselves training did better than those who did not. Van Gyn et al. argued that imagining themselves training had influenced participants' self-concept, which then influenced their behaviour to be more consistent with the self-concept.

Self-perception theory Theory that people learn about the self by examining their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Self-discrepancy theory

Self-discrepancy theory focuses on people's awareness of discrepancies between how they are, how they would like to be and how they think they ought to be (Higgins, 1987). It also focuses on how people react, emotionally, to these discrepancies. According to Higgins, there are three aspects of the self-concept:

1. **Actual self**: how a person sees the self at the present time
2. **Ideal self**: how a person would like to see the self
3. **Ought self**: how a person thinks they ought to be, based on ideals of duty and responsibility.

According to the theory, people strive to make sure that their actual self is as close as possible to the ideal and ought selves, which both act as benchmarks to help guide behaviour

Self-discrepancy theory Theory that focuses on people's perceptions of the discrepancies between their actual self and their perceived and ought selves. The theory examines emotional responses to these discrepancies.

Actual self How a person is at the present time.

Ideal self How a person would like to be.

Ought self How a person thinks they should be.

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FIGURE 2.6 Self-discrepancy theory According to self-discrepancy theory, there are emotional consequences for people when the actual, ideal and ought selves are discrepant.

(see Figure 2.6). If significant discrepancies exist between the actual, ideal and ought selves, this results in psychological discomfort. For example, if a person is studying dentistry at university but would really rather be a musician, and their parents would like them to join the family retail business, there are significant discrepancies between the actual, ideal and ought selves and the person will probably experience some psychological uneasiness.

According to the theory, different discrepancies are associated with different responses. A discrepancy between the actual and ought selves is said to lead to emotional reactions such as frustration and annoyance (Higgins, Bond, Klein & Strauman, 1986). The dentistry student who visits their parents during the university vacation will be acutely aware of the fact that their parents would rather they joined the family business. The student is not therefore fulfilling their parents expectations and will experience frustration and annoyance. A discrepancy between the actual and ideal self, on the other hand, is said to lead to emotions such as sadness and disappointment. The person studying hard for their dentistry exam may feel dejected if they think about the music they could be playing instead. In one classic study, Higgins et al. (1986) demonstrated the emotional responses to actual/ideal and actual/ought self-discrepancies. They initially gathered data on participants' level of self-discrepancies. In a separate testing session, participants were asked to focus on (and describe) the difference between their actual and their ideal or ought self. Results revealed that high discrepancy participants who thought about their *actual/ideal* discrepancies experienced more dejection-related emotions (e.g., disappointment and sadness). High discrepancy participants who were asked to think about their *actual/ought* discrepancies experienced negative emotions related to agitation (e.g., annoyance and frustration). Compared to the high discrepancy participants, the low discrepancy participants experienced no significant changes in either type of emotion.

It is thus reasonable to assume that people will be motivated to reduce their self-discrepancies in order to eliminate, or at least attenuate, the experience of negative emotions. They may change aspects of their behaviour in order for their actual self to become more in line with the ideal, therefore engaging in a process of **self-regulation**. However, people may not necessarily display this adaptive response. Instead, negative emotions can sometimes get in the way of self-regulation and the ability to make changes. Feeling sad, frustrated or annoyed can lead people to look for 'quick fix' solutions that make them feel better in the short term rather than helping them reach a long-term solution. One common example often used to describe this type of outcome relates to how people manage their weight. A person on a diet might be able to manage what they eat, but being reminded that they are still not as thin as they would like may lead them to opt for a quick fix solution to their unhappiness. Thus, they may head to the nearest fridge for a chocolate bar. Similarly, you may know people who engage in 'retail therapy' to make themselves feel better. However, such behaviour does not assist the individual in reaching a long-term goal.

Self-regulation The attempt to match behaviour with an ideal or ought standard of the self.

EXPLORING FURTHER

We have just linked binge eating and consumerism, or 'retail therapy', to self-discrepancy. Can you find articles that, at least going by the titles and abstracts, seem to provide evidence for this? What other problematic behaviours have been linked to self-discrepancy? Use Internet search engines or research databases to find out. For example, you could use Google Scholar to find articles. Alternatively, if your university library has access to PsycINFO or a similar psychology-specific database, use search terms to try to find relevant articles. Try searching a combination of terms such as 'self-discrepancy' (remember to use quote marks to be clear you are searching this as a phrase and not two separate words) or 'self-discrepancy' and 'addiction'.

Regulatory focus theory

Higgins (1997, 1998) built on self-discrepancy theory to create **regulatory focus theory**, which proposes that people have two distinct self-regulatory systems – promotion and prevention – that are related to different types of goals. People who tend to be more focused on *promotion* will actively go out to seek ways to achieve their ideal, but people focused on prevention tend to think more about what they ought to be and the obligations they have. There is some evidence to suggest that there are individual differences in this construct. In other words, some people are generally promotion focused and others are more generally prevention focused. Higgins and Silberman (1998) argued that this difference emerges during childhood. In particular, promotion-focused adults tend to have more childhood experiences based on the presence or absence of positive adult responses (e.g., praised for being good and criticized for being bad). In contrast, prevention-focused adults tend to have more childhood experiences based on the presence or absence of negative adult responses (e.g., criticized for being bad and praised for being good).

Regulatory focus theory
Theory asserting that people have two distinct self-regulatory systems – promotion, which makes people more approach-oriented in constructing the self, and prevention, which makes people more cautious and avoidant in constructing the self.

The promotion system is related to people's achievements towards their ideal self. For example, they may focus on achieving a high grade and study harder to do so. They may, in general, show a focus on challenges as things to move towards and to achieve. Research suggests that promotion-focused people tend to remember information related to the pursuit of success, whereas prevention-focused people tend to focus on failures (Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992). Furthermore, promotion-focused individuals tend to focus on tasks described as gains or non-gains, whereas prevention-oriented individuals appear to focus more on tasks described as potential losses or non-losses (Shah, Higgins & Friedman, 1998). In general too, promotion focus is related to higher levels of self-reported quality of life, in comparison to prevention focus (taking other personality differences into account; Manczak, Zapata-Gietl & McAdams, 2014).

Although there are individual differences in regulatory focus, the same person can switch from promotion to prevention, and from prevention to promotion, depending on the situation. When people are presented with the possibility of losses, they become prevention focused, and when presented with the possibility of gains, they become promotion focused (e.g., Eiser, Eiser & Greco, 2004). Mood is another temporary factor that can influence regulatory focus, and was the topic of a **meta-analysis** by Baas, De Dreu and Nijstad (2008). Previous research had revealed mixed findings about the relationship between mood and creativity. Specifically, some studies showed that positive mood states can enhance creativity, whereas others showed that people are more creative when in a negative mood. Analysing all these results together, Baas et al. found that regardless of their positivity or negativity, mood states associated with prevention focus (e.g., relaxed, anxious) were also associated with reduced creativity. Positive moods associated with promotion focus (e.g., happiness) were correlated with creativity, while negative moods were not related to decreases in creativity, so long as they were promotion oriented (e.g., sadness). A meta-analysis such as this is

Meta-analysis
A technique in which the results of many studies are combined and analysed together.

a good way of teasing apart discrepant findings but also relies on a good level of critical thinking. Baas et al.'s application of regulatory focus theory allowed them to solve the puzzle of the effects of mood on creativity (see also Baas, Roskes, Sligte, Nijstad & De Dreu, 2013).

The benefits of promotion focus for creativity and the adverse effects of prevention focus were also demonstrated in an experiment by Friedman and Förster (2001, Study 1). They elicited a temporary regulatory focus with a manipulation in which participants had to solve a maze. A mouse was depicted in the middle of the maze, and in the promotion-focus condition, a tasty-looking piece of Swiss cheese was outside the maze, while in the prevention-focus condition, a nasty-looking hawk was hovering over the maze. In solving the maze, participants were either promoting the mouse's pursuit of the cheese or preventing the mouse from being eaten. After completing the maze, participants were asked to complete a range of creativity tasks. Those who had completed the 'cheesy' maze were significantly more creative than those who had completed the 'hawky' maze. The effects of promotion versus prevention focus have also more recently be demonstrated in workplace settings (e.g., Sacramento, Fay & West, 2013; Wallace, Butts, Johnson, Stevens & Smith, 2016). In general, promotion focus increases creativity and innovation, especially when tasks are demanding.

EXPLORING FURTHER

One of the tests of creativity used by Friedman and Förster is as follows. First, get a pen and piece of paper and a timing device and set it for one minute (or ask a friend to time you). Then, write down as many uses for a brick as you can in 60 seconds. Count how many uses you came up with. The average participant in these studies comes up with around six or seven. The second one is to evaluate how creative these responses are. Rate each one on the following scale:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
very uncreative neither creative nor uncreative very creative

This is the dependent measure of 'creativity' used in Friedman and Förster's (2001) study, which has been used quite widely elsewhere. Normally, of course, participants do not rate their own creativity. Instead, it is rated by a coder (or, more typically, several coders) who does not know the identity of the participants, nor what condition of the experiment they were in. There are no specific guidelines for judging creativity. Friedman and Förster (2001) asked an independent group of 12 coders to rate the creativity of the responses using the question above and scores were averaged to provide a mean score of creativity for each participant. An example of a creative solution was 'to crush it and use it to draw pictures on the sidewalk' and an example of an uncreative response was 'to build a house with it'.

How did you get on? You can try this out on your friends. Of course, this is not really a test of how creative you are as a person. The whole point of Friedman and Förster's (2001) experiment is that this measure of creativity can change as a result of a situational variable, such as cues that encourage promotion versus prevention focus in the environment. It is a task that seems to capture at least some aspects of creativity. How else do you think creativity could be measured?

Control theory of self-regulation
Theory of the self proposing that people test the self against private standards and regulate their behaviours to meet these standards.

Control theory of self-regulation

The **control theory of self-regulation**, devised by Carver and Scheier (1981, 1998), argues that people compare themselves with internal or private standards for the self. However, in contrast with other theories, it proposes that people engage in a cognitive feedback loop of self-regulation that involves four steps: test, operate, test and exit. It looks a bit like a flowchart (see Figure 2.7). In the initial *test* phase, the individual compares the self with one of two standards. As we saw earlier, self-awareness involves both public and private awareness, so according to this theory, individuals may compare

themselves to a public (e.g., group norm) or private standard (e.g., value) for the self. If this test reveals a discrepancy, that is, the self does not meet the ideal, then the individual addresses the problem by going into the *operate* phase of the loop. In this phase, the individual will endeavour to change some aspect of the self (usually a behaviour) to try to more closely match the standard they would like to meet. Naturally, at some later time, they will think about this aspect of the self again and, in doing so, they re-enter the test phase and reassess the extent to which their behaviour meets the standard or ideal. If no discrepancy is detected, then the process ends and the individual exits the feedback loop. However, until this standard is met, the individual will remain in the loop, changing their behaviour and retesting until the discrepancy has been resolved.

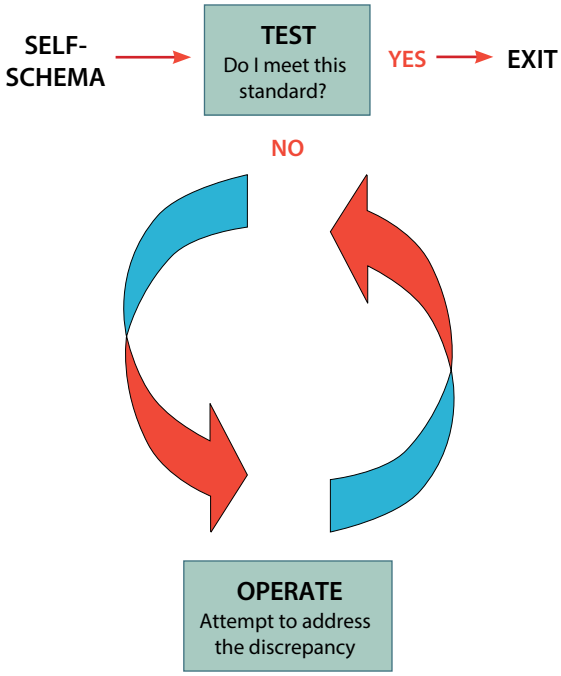

FIGURE 2.7 Carver and Scheier's (1981) control theory of self-regulation

According to the control theory of self-regulation, people can make improvements to the self by self-appraisal and self-regulation. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that this may work in efforts to prevent relapse among sex offenders (e.g., Kingston, Yates & Olver, 2014; Ward, 2000), and in people's efforts to pursue their goals (e.g., Emmons, 1996; Mann, de Ridder & Fujita, 2013). However, this is not always the case. For example, Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven and Tice (1998) demonstrated that carefully regulating an aspect of the self can actually make it more difficult to regulate other aspects of the self. Participants volunteered for a study ostensibly about taste perception. They were asked not to eat for some time before they participated in the study. When they came to the laboratory, they found that it smelled of chocolate cookies that had just been freshly baked. Participants were then seated behind a desk with a bowl of chocolate cookies on one side of the desk and a bowl of radishes on the other. Participants were placed in one of two possible conditions. In one they were asked to eat two/three radishes and in the other, they were asked to eat two/three cookies. Baumeister et al. reasoned that participants in the radishes condition would have to self-regulate, in other words, they would have to stop themselves from eating the cookies. Essentially, participants were in either a self-regulation condition or a condition where they were free to pursue their desired behaviour. After completing the task, participants were asked to help the experimenter on a second task, where they were asked to complete a virtually impossible problem and to take their time doing so. Those who had participated in the self-regulation condition (the radishes group) persisted to solve the difficult puzzle, on average, for only 8 minutes compared to participants in the other condition (the cookies group) who persisted, on average, for 19 minutes. Baumeister et al. argued that the first group of participants struggled because they had to self-regulate on the earlier task. This creates a problem because people do not possess endless cognitive resources to cope when self-regulation is required. The cognitively depleted participants therefore struggled to self-regulate on a second task, even when it had nothing to do with the original task.

Known as **ego depletion**, this effect has been widely demonstrated (for a meta-analysis of 83 studies, see Hagger, Wood, Stiff & Chatzisarantis, 2010), and is expected by the **strength model of self-control** proposed by Baumeister et al. (1998). According to this model, self-control is akin to physical exercise. Just as we get tired after exercising for a certain period of time and can no longer continue effectively, we are not able to exert effortful control for an unlimited period of time. After a rest, the ability to self-control returns (Tyler & Burns, 2009). People who regularly engage in self-control over a long period of time slowly become less susceptible to ego depletion, just as exercising regularly over a period of months makes people physically fitter (Gailliot, Plant, Butz & Baumeister, 2007).

Ego depletion
The notion that self-control and willpower are a finite resource that can be used up.

Strength model of self-control
Theory arguing that self-control cannot be maintained for an unlimited period of time and needs to be replenished.

CRITICAL FOCUS

Ego depletion

The concept of ego depletion is based on a metaphor that ultimately stems from the writings of Freud and other psychodynamic theorists. These theorists saw human beings as affected by mental energies. When people think and attempt to control themselves, they draw on a limited reservoir of mental energy that is eventually exhausted. Although intuitively appealing, this kind of metaphor is shaky ground for a scientific theory, no matter how brilliant the insights and how practically important the findings it might help to uncover. Furthermore, there is a concern that ego depletion may not really depend on the fact that people are *really* consuming a limited resource but that they *think* that self-control consumes energy and they cannot keep it up forever (Landau, Meier & Keefer, 2010). Indeed, Job, Dweck and Walton (2010) found that only participants who believed that self-control is tiring and they cannot do it forever were actually susceptible to ego depletion. Those who believed that self-control is unlimited, or who were experimentally led to believe in limitless self-control, were not susceptible to ego depletion later.

However, the idea that self-control consumes energy may be more than just a metaphor. Some scholars suggest that ego depletion may be underpinned by the consumption of blood sugar. The brain consumes much more glucose than its size would suggest. Ego depletion has been shown to be associated with decreases in blood glucose. Furthermore, some research suggests that people appear less prone to ego depletion if they consume sugar, for example in the form of sugary versus no-sugar, 'diet' lemonade (e.g., Dvorak & Simons, 2009; Masciampo & Baumeister, 2008).

These contradictory perspectives and findings are interesting and enriching for social psychology, but perhaps more crucial for the study of ego depletion at present is whether or not it is a real effect. Recently, researchers have questioned whether ego depletion really exists, or if other factors such as **publication bias** – the tendency to publish significant findings and not publish non-significant findings – may have led to its prominence in the literature, and the consistency of the effect as reported in meta-analyses. Specifically, Carter and McCullough (2013) analysed the results of the meta-analysis by Hagger et al. (2010) and found evidence for what they interpreted as publication bias. Specifically, their analyses revealed that the probability of finding so many significant effects was quite low, and therefore that there were probably many studies 'in the file drawer' that did not find the ego depletion effect and therefore did not get published. Consistent with these findings, several studies have failed to replicate the ego depletion effect (e.g., Xu et al., 2014), or the idea that ego depletion might be reduced by the use of glucose (Lange & Eggert, 2014). Other studies have found the effect to be there, but much smaller in size than reported in meta-analyses (e.g., Tuk, Zhang & Sweldens, 2015). However, as Hagger and Chatzisarantis (2014) pointed out, the types of analyses conducted by Carter and McCullough (2013) do not always indicate a publication bias, and that researchers should therefore be cautious about dismissing the ego depletion effect. This led to a large-scale attempt to replicate the ego depletion effect in many laboratories across the world.

Hagger et al. (2016) conducted a multi-lab replication (i.e., replication studies across many different research groups) that tested the ego depletion effect on a total of 2,141 particpants in 23 different settings. They used a standard method of testing ego depletion and adopted the same method and procedure across all of the settings, as is typical of such multi-lab replication projects. Results revealed very small effects of ego depletion and much smaller than those reported in the original studies and meta-analysis. In fact, the effects were close to being null. These findings raise considerable doubt about the ego depletion effect. However, as we noted in Chapter 1, just because a finding fails to replicate in one attempt, this does not mean that the effect should be rejected altogether. In this case, only one task was used and this does not mean that ego depletion would not emerge using different tasks. In fact, a more recent multi-lab replication using a different task revealed a small but significant ego depletion effect (Dang et al., 2019). Also, multi-lab replication by Hagger et al. (2016) only focused on the effect itself and not the mechanisms that underlie it. It is clear that more research is required to understand the existence (and if so the size and nature) of the ego depletion effect.

Questions

1. If you were to design a study to test ego depletion, what would you do? How might you approach the topic differently?
2. What other biological processes might be involved in self-control processes and how would you test them?
3. Read more about multi-lab replication projects. What other important findings in social psychology have not replicated. What explanations are put forward?

At this point however, you should read the Critical Focus box on ego depletion. In recent years, this effect has come under some scrutiny (e.g., Carter & McCullough, 2013, 2014) and was recently part of a multi-lab replication to examine the existence and strength of the effect (Hagger et al., 2016).

Publication bias Research is more likely to be published if its results are significant than when they are not.

Social comparison theory

In addition to observing their own behaviour and comparing their actual self with other internal standards of the self, people also look to others for important information about the self. Specifically, they compare themselves with other people – both those who they see as 'better' and those they view as 'worse' on various dimensions – to learn important information about themselves. This is quite different to the process of comparing oneself with various internal standards of the self. After all, a person's values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours are subjective and cannot be validated against an objective source. When a person defines the self against their ideal self, for example, they are comparing themselves with an ideal that cannot be externally validated. Comparing oneself with others, on the other hand, allows the individual to compare the self with a source that can be externally validated. Comparing oneself with others provides an external and objective anchor against which one can compare one's values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

TIME TO REFLECT

List five people you compare yourself to from time to time. Once you have done this, read the rest of our coverage of social comparison theory, and then return to this exercise afterwards. Did you pick people who are largely upward comparators or downward comparators? Or are they much the same? What dimensions do you compare each of them to yourself on (e.g., interests, style, values, popularity, social skills, ability, effort, achievement in work, study, sports or some other achievement domain)? Do you really measure yourself against each of these people or do you look to them as examples of what (not) to do? How well do you think social comparison theory applies to you?

Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) is specific about how people make these comparisons and why they do so. According to this theory, people learn information about themselves and how to perceive themselves by comparing themselves with other people. It is important for people to feel confident in their perceptions of themselves and in the absence of objectively valid information about the self, people tend to base their evaluations of themselves on comparisons with others. In making these comparisons, people often compare themselves with others who are similar to the self. This makes sense because people want to validate their sense of self and often look to the closest others to do so. However, it is often more useful (and sometimes even unavoidable) to compare the self with others who are 'better' than the self on whatever dimension. This **upward social comparison** can have a negative impact on self-esteem (Blanton, Crocker & Miller, 1999; Collins, 1996; Vogel, Rose, Okdie, Eckles & Franz, 2015; Wood, 1989). However, there are strategies to deal with this, as we will discuss in the next section. Also, the envy and admiration that people feel when they compare upwards can motivate them to improve themselves (van de Ven, 2015).

Social comparison theory Theory of the self, arguing that to learn about and define the self, people compare themselves with other people.

Upward social comparison The act of comparing oneself with someone who is perceived to be better on the relevant dimension.

It is also possible to compare the self with others who are 'worse' than the self in a specific domain and this is known as **downward social comparison**. Of course, this type of comparison makes a person feel good. It is always nice to compare favourably to another person and, indeed, this has positive effects for the self-concept (Wills, 1981), self-evaluations generally (Strickhouser & Zell, 2015), and even wellbeing in later life (Stewart, Chipperfield, Ruthig & Heckhausen, 2012). However, to be able to make accurate judgements about the self, a person needs to engage in both upward and downward social comparisons. Think of

Downward social comparison The act of comparing oneself with someone who is perceived to be worse on the relevant dimension.

a particular sporting ability, for example. People learn how good they really are at a particular sport by comparing themselves with a broad range of others, both those who do better and those who perform worse than themselves.

Temporal comparison The act of comparing oneself with the way one was in the past, or with an anticipated future self.

Just as people compare themselves to others, they also compare themselves as they are now to themselves as they have been in the past. These are known as **temporal comparisons** (Albert, 1977). Like social comparisons, temporal comparisons can be upward (e.g., 'I used to be more relaxed') or downward (e.g., 'I am wiser now than I was'). Albert (1977) argued that these temporal comparisons behave in much the same way as social comparisons – downward social comparisons make us feel better about ourselves as we are now, whereas upward social comparisons may help us determine how to improve (e.g., recover lost ground). Subsequent research shows that people engage in temporal comparison at least as often as they engage in social comparisons. However, people are especially likely to engage in temporal comparisons – typically downward temporal comparisons – when they are interested in feeling good about themselves. When people want to improve, they are more likely to engage in social comparisons (Wilson & Ross, 2000).

In a follow-up paper, Wilson and Ross (2001) reported that people boost their current self-esteem by denigrating their past selves, who then provide a convenient downward comparison. Wilson and Ross asked psychology students to rate themselves on a series of traits (e.g., narrow-minded, immature, naive, self-confident, self-motivated, socially skilled) about two weeks into their first year. Two months later, the same students rated themselves a second time, and were also asked to rate themselves as they were when they completed the questionnaire the first time. Results show that participants systematically denigrated their past selves, rating themselves more harshly in retrospect than they did at the time. This retrospective self-denigration allowed participants to convince themselves that they were better now than they had been two months earlier (see Figure 2.8). However, they actually seemed to see themselves somewhat less favourably the second time than they had the first time The reason for this is unknown, but perhaps the excitement and anticipation of starting university provides a temporary boost to self-evaluation, which wears off within a couple of months.

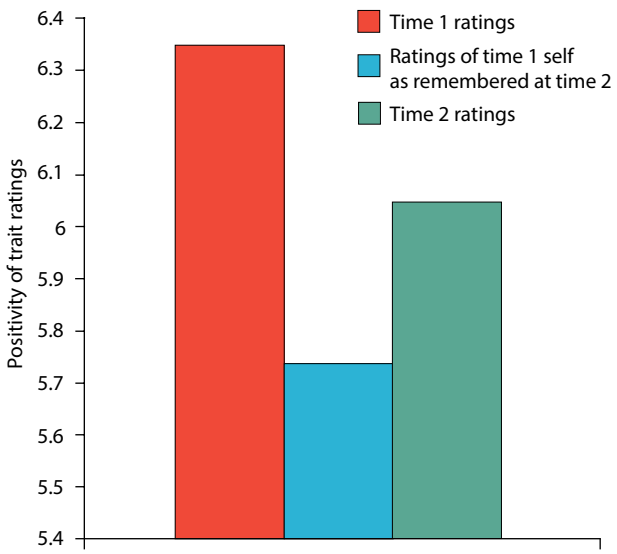

FIGURE 2.8 Students' self ratings over time First-year students in psychology were asked to rate themselves two weeks into their first term, and then for a second time two months later. At the second time, they were also asked to rate themselves as they had been at the time of the first set of ratings. Results show that these students denigrated their past selves. In essence, people create a disadvantaged past self who is the basis for downward temporal comparison.

Source: Data from Wilson and Ross (2001)

It seems paradoxical that, at one level, people would want to preserve their self-esteem, but denigrate their past selves to achieve it. It would appear that the value of the past self is expendable in the pursuit to esteem the present self. However, this result may be less paradoxical than it seems. Different brain regions – the medial prefrontal cortex and the right inferior parietal cortex respectively – appear to be associated with thinking about the present self and the past (or future) selves (D'Argembeau et al., 2010; see also Stawarczyk & D'Argembeau, 2015 for a review). Versions of oneself that are distant in time may be perceived to be rather unlike the 'me' of the present day, and their full humanity, relative to one's present self, may be less salient (Haslam & Bain, 2007).

Self-evaluation maintenance model

Imagine you are a footballer who is constantly outscored by a particular teammate, or a student whose brother or sister always performs better at university. You are unlikely to feel particularly good about these things. After all, you are constantly in a situation where you are compared with

someone 'better', or in other words, you are constantly faced with an upward social comparison. Sometimes, comparing the self with others can make people feel good, and sometimes it may not. Ultimately, however, people want to feel good about themselves and maintain positive self-esteem. The **self-evaluation maintenance model** (Tesser, 1988) explains how people are able to do this in the case of upward social comparisons. Specifically, when people compare themselves with individuals whose achievements outshine their own, this model explains how they are able to maintain their self-esteem.

Self-evaluation maintenance model Theory explaining how people are able to maintain their self-esteem in situations where they engage in upward social comparisons.

As we learned earlier, people often engage in upward social comparisons. Knowing someone who is successful or a high achiever can naturally invoke an upward social comparison. This may be especially the case when the domain is *important* or *relevant* to the individual's self-concept. For example, a footballer will see their teammate as a relevant anchor for comparing the self, and their success may therefore be threatening to the self-concept, undermining the view of the self as successful. Another factor that may lead to social comparison is *uncertainty* about one's own abilities in the specific domain. For example, a footballer who is uncertain of their ability as a striker may be more likely to engage in upward comparisons with other strikers and may especially feel challenged when confronted with a high achiever. This uncertainty can lead to a cycle where the individual becomes less certain of their abilities and feels more threatened. Both factors are likely to adversely influence feelings about the self.

According to the self-evaluation maintenance model, people adopt specific strategies to deal with such situations so that they are able to maintain a positive sense of self:

1. Exaggerate the ability of the 'better' person: your football teammate may just be a freak or some kind of genius whom any person would struggle to surpass. In doing so, it is still possible to think of the self as good because the comparison other is in an entirely different league and is an unrealistic target to aspire to (e.g., Alicke, LoSchiavo, Zerbst & Zhang, 1997).
2. Engage in downward social comparison: while people are thinking of the person who is better, they can cope by also thinking of someone worse. You may think of your poor football friend on the bench who never gets the opportunity to play. Comparing the self with less favourable others is good for self-esteem.
3. Avoid the comparison person: one might avoid speaking to the football teammate, which makes one feel better because the person is not constantly visible, making obvious the gap in ability.
4. Devalue the dimension on which the other person is better: for example, you may say to yourself that football is not that important anyway – it is not the be all and end all – so it does not matter that your teammate is better.

Pam Simon/Pixabay

However, people do not always engage in upward social comparison in such situations and so do not always need to resort to one of the self-esteem maintaining strategies. You can probably

remember a time when a sibling, family member or close friend did well or achieved something good, but rather than feeling anxious and unhappy (and therefore needing to engage in self-repair), you felt proud and happy. How does this come about? Instead of engaging in a process of social comparison, people sometimes engage in **social reflection**, where they are able to derive their self-esteem from the success and achievements of close others, without thinking about their own achievement on a particular domain (e.g., Tesser, 1991; Tesser & Collins, 1988). For example, if we like a person, we are more likely to feel positive about their achievements, and we are also likely to have a positive response if we see the person as particularly deserving (Ortony, Clore & Collins, 1988). We also do this on a group level. For example, we have a tendency to 'bask' in the reflected glory of the sports team we support – it makes us feel good to associate ourselves with success (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1976). According to the model, people may do so, but only if one of two conditions are met:

Social reflection Ability to derive self-esteem from the successes and achievements of close others, without thinking about one's own achievement on a particular domain.

1. The domain on which the high-performing person is successful may be *irrelevant*. For example, one may not consider it an important part of the self-concept to be a good singer. So, if one's close friend is a successful vocalist, this does not challenge our own self-concept. If this is the case, we can be happy for the person because it adds something to the self (e.g., we know someone successful) without feeling threatened.
2. We may be less threatened by a high-performing individual if we are confident that we too are exceptional in this particular domain. For example, if a person is a successful vocalist whose best friend on their course is also enjoying some success, threat to the self-concept is less of a problem. Again, the other person's success is likely to add something to our self-concept because it reminds us that we are surrounded by successful people, and that feels good.

In a similar vein, Lockwood and Kunda (1997) found that thinking about 'superstars' in self-relevant domains such as sport and the arts led to self-deflation when people felt their own abilities were fixed, or that similar achievements were unattainable for them. If people felt they were young and able enough to have a chance to emulate their superstars, then thinking about them actually produced inspiration. In later studies, Lockwood and Kunda (1999) found that superstars, while normally seen as inspiring role models, produced deflation if people had already been primed to think of the best aspects of themselves as they currently are. Apparently, superstars are inspiring in that they help us see how we might improve ourselves. If we think there is little scope for us to improve, then superstars are intimidating social comparators.

SELF–ESTEEM

From the theories covered in this chapter so far, you will now be in no doubt that people spend a lot of time thinking about themselves, comparing themselves with others and thinking about how they fare. We have also mentioned the term 'self-esteem' a few times already. As laypeople, we all know more or less what this concept means, and we know that our self-esteem can have significant implications for how we function psychologically. In this section we focus on the scientific study of self-esteem.

Self-esteem A person's subjective appraisal of the self as intrinsically positive or negative.

Self-esteem is defined in the literature as people's subjective appraisal of themselves as intrinsically positive or negative (Rosenberg, 1968; Sedikides & Gregg, 2003). A person's self-esteem can vary quite a bit depending on the situation. For example, it can be particularly high when we achieve success or when something good happens to us, or it can be particularly low when we fail at something important or if something bad happens. However, thinking of your friends, family and acquaintances, you can probably call to mind examples of people

who generally have high self-esteem and those who have lower self-esteem. While there are situational fluctuations in self-esteem, there is evidence to suggest that there are chronic individual differences in self-esteem. We discuss these individual differences here, but to understand these differences, we must first understand the origins of self-esteem.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Psychologists have measured self-esteem in many different ways. Search online for articles that have introduced different measures of self-esteem. Look back to the previous Exploring Further exercise for some more specific suggestions about where to begin. Try, for example, combining the phrase 'self-esteem' and 'test' or 'scale'. See if you can find, and complete, at least two online measures (sometimes these are described in full in the article, but sometimes you need to find them in online lectures or demonstrations). Compare yourself to the reported means, and reflect on the similarities and differences between the measures.

Developing self-esteem

Theorists argue that the way children are raised is a strong determinant of their self-esteem (e.g., Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003; Baumrind, 1991). Specifically, it is argued that there are three parenting styles that differ in terms of how demanding (e.g., controlling, punishing) and responsive (e.g., warm, supporting) the parent is to the child. Findings suggest that the following parental styles can affect self-esteem:

1. Authoritarian: children with parents who are authoritarian (more demanding and less responsive) tend to have lower self-esteem. Such parents are often too strict with their children, leading children to feel less confident in their own abilities.
2. Permissive: children whose parents are overly permissive (less demanding and more responsive) also have lower levels of self-esteem (e.g., DeHart, Pelham & Tennen, 2006).
3. Authoritative: children with the highest self-esteem tend to have parents who are both demanding and responsive. Such parents seem to strike the right balance between strictness and punishment when children do things wrong, and being supporting and warm with their children.

There is some evidence to suggest that children develop a stable sense of self-esteem from their childhood experiences. However, it is also the case that self-esteem changes over the course of the life span. For example, a meta-analysis on self-esteem by Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling and Potter (2002) found that self-esteem among children (aged 6–11) was fairly unstable, arguably because children's self-concepts are in a process of development. It was found that among adults in their twenties, self-esteem was more stable than in the young children and that this remained into later adulthood. The authors argued that this is because adults have a more defined self-concept that is more resistant to life events. The authors also found, however, that people's self-esteem becomes less stable again around age 60. They argued that this might be because of the many life changes that occur during this period of life – people retire, their health may fail and they may experience the death of close others. In general, self-esteem appears to increase from adolescence to middle adulthood, being at its highest around 50 years of age, and then declining in old age. It is a relatively stable trait too. That is, individuals who have relatively high (or low) self-esteem at one point in life are likely to have relatively high (or low) self-esteem later on (Orth & Robins, 2014).

TIME TO REFLECT

The question of how to parent is an ideological battlefield. Everything from antisocial behaviour, aggression and welfare dependency is popularly blamed on bad parenting. Many popular TV programmes (e.g., comedies such as BBC's *Motherland* and Netflix's *The Let Down*), deal with feelings of parental inadequacy. People do not always agree on what is good and bad parenting. Amy Chua's (2011) book, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother,* highlights what she perceived as differences between Eastern and Western styles of parenting. The concept of the tiger mother refers to the style of traditional Chinese parenting, typically much stricter than Western parenting. The book generated mixed responses from parents and commentators. Many argued that Chua's approach could help encourage all children to reach their potential and the world would see less 'brats'. Others argued that children need to have a fun childhood in which they can explore and express themselves without strict parental control. Knowing what you know about the development of self-esteem, do you think tiger mothering is a good idea? What is the role of culture in this example?

Sources of self-esteem

Some sources of self-esteem are internal to the person. For example, Pelham and Swann (1989) found that people who tend to experience mostly positive emotions, and rarely experience negative emotions, have high self-esteem. People who have specific, positive self-schemas (e.g., a good friend, a hard worker, devoted mother) also experience higher self-esteem, especially if they are relatively certain of their positive self-evaluation on these specific dimensions, and if they attach importance to them. People who are abstract and flexible in the way they evaluate themselves on these schemas also have more robust self-esteem (Updegraff, Emanuel, Suh & Gallagher, 2010). For example, if you evaluate how good a friend you are strictly on the basis of how quickly you return messages, your self-esteem may take a downward turn at times where you are too busy or distracted to reply to your friends' messages. In contrast, your self-esteem will be more resilient if you also bear in mind the other respects in which you are actually a good friend, such as the times you have helped your friend through a crisis.

Some sources of self-esteem come from outside the person. Social acceptance by others helps to boost self-esteem (e.g., Leary, Cottrell & Phillips, 2001; Leary, Tambor, Terdal & Downs, 1995). This is consistent with the symbolic interactionists' idea that the self is a social construct that serves social purposes. Leary et al. (1995, 2001) argue that self-esteem is a kind of internal barometer of the extent to which the person is being included versus excluded by other people. The more you are socially excluded, the lower your self-esteem; the more you are included, the higher your self-esteem. Thus, Leary et al. refer to self-esteem as a *sociometer*. High self-esteem is a pleasant state, whereas low self-esteem is aversive, so people are generally motivated to maintain high levels of self-esteem. According to **sociometer theory**, this motivation serves an important purpose. It drives us to behave in ways that increase self-esteem, which means that it motivates us to ensure that we are socially included by behaving in ways that are acceptable and rewarding for others. Conversely, it deters us from risking harm to our self-esteem by acting in ways that are likely to lead to rejection. Thus, self-esteem is part of a system in which we monitor our social environment for signs of inclusion or rejection, and modify our behaviour in order to ensure that we are socially included (see later in this chapter for the importance of inclusion, or 'belonging', in human life).

Sociometer theory Theory of self-esteem arguing that people are motivated to maintain high levels of self-esteem and do this by ensuring they are socially included.

Leary et al. (1995) uncovered early evidence for their theory in a set of five studies. They showed that self-esteem was highly correlated with people's assumptions about whether they are likely to be accepted or rejected by other people. Denissen, Penke, Schmitt and van

Aken (2008) compared the average self-esteem levels of citizens of a number of developed countries. These countries were members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and hailed from all continents except Africa. They found that countries whose citizens regularly spend time with friends enjoyed higher levels of self-esteem. This finding held, even controlling for the overall happiness, wealth and anxiety levels of each country.

Other studies have dealt with the problems of interpreting correlational findings in cross-sectional research designs such as those used by Leary et al. That is, does *a cause b,* or does *b cause* a? In a longitudinal study, Srivastava and Beer (2005) showed that being liked by others predicted subsequent increases in self-esteem, precisely as sociometer theory suggests. Having high self-esteem did not predict being liked by others later. Similarly, in a study of German citizens, Denissen et al. (2008) found that the quality of interactions with friends and family members predicted self-esteem later in the same day. However, self-esteem did not predict interaction quality later in the day. Again, the direction of causality seems to point in the direction suggested by sociometer theory – from inclusive social interactions to self-esteem, and not vice versa (Figure 2.9). Another longitudinal study found that adolescents' popularity amongst their peers positively predicted self-esteem, whereas self-esteem did not predict how popular the adolescents were amongst their peers (Reitz, Motti-Stefanidi & Asendorpf, 2016).

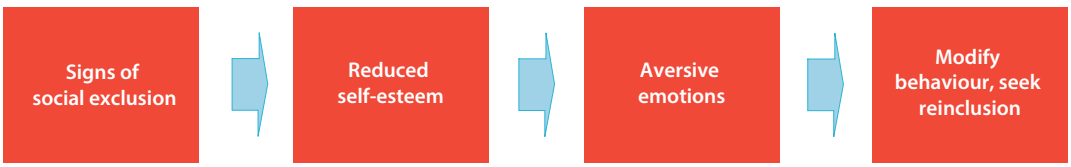

FIGURE 2.9 Causal sequence suggested by the sociometer theory of self-esteem Self-esteem acts as an internal 'barometer' of social inclusion. When there are signs of social exclusion (e.g., a rebuff from a friend, a party that one is not invited to), self-esteem is reduced, triggering negative emotions. To escape these negative emotions, people act in ways they think will result in their social reinclusion (e.g., making a renewed effort to strengthen the friendship).

Sociometer theory is able to cast light on some of the specific sources of self-esteem. Anthony, Holmes and Wood's research (2007) found that self-esteem is most strongly connected to self-evaluations on traits that help gain social acceptance. For their participants (Canadian undergraduate students), this was typically appearance and popularity. Thus, self-esteem was most strongly correlated with these traits. However, when people are in roles where others depend on them, traits such as kindness and understanding may be more important in being accepted. For example, if you are in a close personal relationship, being kind and understanding is important in being accepted by the person whose acceptance of you presumably matters most – your partner.

Like other widely discussed theories, sociometer theory has had its critics. Notably, Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arnd and Schimel (2004) point out that sociometer theory is less convincing about how people react to signs of social exclusion. Frequently, people react to rejections of romantic overtures, or social exclusion, by withdrawing further from social contact (Baumeister, Wotman & Stillwell, 1993), or even by being aggressive (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice & Stucke, 2001). If self-esteem really is part of a system designed to motivate people to seek social inclusion, they argue, people would respond to social rejection with lowered self-esteem, followed by efforts to be reincluded. It is difficult to explain why they would effectively exclude themselves further from social life following rejection. Interested readers might like to check out Leary's (2004) reply to this and other criticisms by Pyszczynski et al. (2004). Also of interest, a 2010 meta-analysis of 192 studies suggests that the experience of being rejected by others may not lower self-esteem. Instead, it produces a kind of emotional numbness in which people

experience neither positive nor negative mood (Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles & Baumeister, 2010), although this may depend on precisely in what form the rejection is experienced (see Chapter 9 for a discussion of ostracism and its effects).

Contingent self-esteem

Sources of self-esteem vary from person to person. Some people base their self-esteem primarily on their appearance, others on social approval, others on how virtuous they are, and yet others on their successes. Crocker and Wolfe (2001) and Crocker and Park (2004) termed these the 'contingencies' of self-worth. They also developed a contingent self-esteem scale to measure differences between people in what is important to their sense of self-worth. They found that people who base their self-esteem on a narrow range of sources tend to experience lower levels of psychological wellbeing than those who stake their self-esteem on a broad range of sources. This finding is consistent with multiple role theory. Many studies since have provided support for its predictions. For example, among a sample of over 5,000 young Swedish adults, a contingent self-esteem in which self-worth is staked on work performance led both women and men to take risks with their health, by coming in to work even when they were sick (Love, Grimby-Ekman, Eklof, Hagberg & Dellve, 2010).

Consequences of self-esteem

Why does it matter to have a high self-esteem? What happens to people who have lower self-esteem? One review paper suggests that there are positive associations between self-esteem and both life success and general wellbeing in domains such as work, health and relationships (Orth & Robins, 2014). Many social psychologists have attempted to further understand the psychological consequences of having relatively high and lower levels of self-esteem (e.g., Baumeister, Tice & Hutton, 1989; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Sowislo & Orth, 2013). Here, we discuss some of the ways in which a person's level of self-esteem influences how they deal with life events.

Mood regulation

Some research has shown that people who have lower levels of self-esteem are less likely to make the effort to make themselves feel better (e.g., Heimpel, Wood, Marshall & Brown, 2002; Marigold, Cavallo, Holmes & Wood, 2014; Wood, Heimpel & Michela, 2003). For example, Wood et al. (2003) examined people's recollections of positive life events. They found that people with lower levels of self-esteem (compared to people with higher levels) were more likely to downplay the positive feelings they experienced in the event. They also showed a tendency to make themselves feel less positive and distract themselves from the positive feelings. Other findings have shown that people with lower levels of self-esteem also deal differently with negative life events. For example, Heimpel et al. (2002) asked people who had reported a negative event (a failure) to make a list of their immediate plans and the reasons behind them. Results revealed that participants with higher levels of self-esteem (compared to people with lower levels) were more likely to report goals to deal with the setback and improve their mood. These findings together suggest that people who have higher levels of self-esteem make better efforts to regulate their mood. They are more likely to focus on the positive aspects of positive life events and show a more adaptive response to life's setbacks. In contrast, people with lower levels of self-esteem perhaps display a maladaptive response in dealing with life events.

Protection from the terror of death

According to terror management theory (Pyszczynski, Greenberg & Solomon, 1999; Solomon, Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 1991), the most profound anxiety we confront as human beings stems from the knowledge that one day, we must die. Much of our social cognition and behaviour is

motivated by the desire to escape this anxiety. The effects of awareness of mortality are often tested by confronting participants with the inevitability of their death, for example by asking people to write about what will happen to their bodies when they die (versus, say, watching TV). Consistent with terror management theory, this so-called **mortality salience** induction has a range of effects on thoughts, feelings and actions that are consistent with the desire to escape or somehow transcend the inevitability of one's demise. For example, young adults who have just gone through a mortality salience induction report that they want to have more children than control participants – children being an obvious way to leave something of one's self in the world after one's demise (Fritsche et al., 2007; Wisman & Goldenberg, 2005; see Pyszczynski, Solomon & Greenberg, 2015 for a review).

Mortality salience The awareness of one's own inevitable death.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Mortality salience has been manipulated in different ways, but the most widely used manipulation is below. Try it – if you don't mind being reminded of your own mortality. This will give you a hands-on understanding of how these experiments work. Write your answers on a sheet of paper.

The following questions have to do with a new form of projective personality assessment. The content of each of your brief responses will be analysed. Read the following questions about mortality and respond with the first thought that comes to mind.

Please imagine your own death while responding to the following questions:

1. **What will happen to you as you physically die?**
2. **What emotions does thinking about your own death evoke?**

How does this manipulation make you feel? Note that control conditions for mortality experiments typically have participants do nothing before they complete dependent measures, or ask the same questions about an emotionally neutral situation. For example, participants are sometimes asked what happens to them physically as they watch TV, and what emotions watching TV evokes in them.

Do you have any reservations about the validity of this manipulation? Do you think this manipulation did something other than purely evoking awareness of your death? Do you think there might be other ways of eliciting awareness of your own death?

Self-esteem is an important buffer against the anxiety of death, according to this theory. The logic is as follows: to protect themselves against the anxiety of death, individuals collaborate to construct a cultural worldview – a shared set of assumptions about the world that impart meaning, permanence and stability to life. This cultural worldview entails agreed upon standards by which people may be evaluated, and if they live up to these standards of value, they have some hope of literally transcending death (e.g., by entering an afterlife), or symbolically doing so (e.g., being commemorated by one's community after one has died). In terror management theory, self-esteem is acquired by believing that one is living up to these standards of value (see also sociometer theory). Thus, self-esteem is a tremendous buffer against the anxiety elicited by awareness of mortality. If I am a good person according to my community's cultural worldview, then I feel that in some sense I am able to transcend death. Indeed, there is good evidence for this prediction. Participants who have chronically high self-esteem, or whose self-esteem is temporarily boosted by an experimental procedure, are less prone to the effects of mortality salience. Whereas low self-esteem participants respond quite strongly to mortality salience in various ways, including defending their cultural worldview by

derogating people with conflicting views, high self-esteem participants are less prone to doing this (Harmon-Jones et al., 1997). Wisman, Heflick and Goldenberg (2015) found that people who were low (but not high) in self-esteem scored lower on tests of self-awareness after a mortality salience manipulation. Wisman et al. argued that this occurs because people with low self-esteem are especially prone to escape an awareness of the self as a defence against thoughts of death. Other research suggests that **implicit self-esteem** – the unconscious conviction that one is a person of worth – may be a more effective buffer than explicit self-esteem (Schmeichel et al., 2009).

Implicit self-esteem Unconscious, spontaneous or automatic evaluation of the self.

Aggression

Many researchers suggest that people with lower levels of self-esteem are more prone to antisocial acts such as murder (Kirschner, 1992), violent behaviour in gangs (Anderson, 1994), robbery (MacDonald, 1975) and domestic violence (Renzetti, 1992). However, the evidence to support these claims is mixed. Certainly, low levels of serotonin may be associated with both low self-esteem and aggression, as we shall see in Chapter 13. Some studies have shown that low levels of self-esteem are related to high levels of aggression (e.g., Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt & Caspi, 2005; Garofalo, Holden, Zeigler-Hill & Velotti, 2016). However, it is not clear whether aggression is really caused by low self-esteem. Narcissism, a variable that is positively associated with normal self-esteem but is decidedly not the same thing, may be more important.

Narcissism

What about people who have extremely high levels of self-esteem? Much of the literature points to the negative influence of lower levels of self-esteem, but until fairly recently, researchers have been less concerned with the effects of extreme levels of high self-esteem and exaggerated feelings of importance and superiority. Such **narcissistic** individuals, lying at the upper extremity of self-esteem, do not enjoy a stable sense of their self-worth, and instead need the validation of others to maintain their self-concept (Kernis & Paradise, 2002). Indeed, some research suggests that narcissists, while professing positive evaluations of themselves, have unconscious doubts about their worth, which are accessible using a procedure known as the Implicit Association Test (Jordan, Spencer, Zanna, Hoshino-Browne & Correll, 2003; but for a critique and alternative findings, see Campbell, Bosson, Goheen, Lakey & Kernis, 2007). Therefore, having an extremely high self-esteem is not as good as one might expect it to be. Research also shows that narcissists can become aggressive in the face of criticism or any other perceived threat to their insecure image (Baumeister, Smart & Boden, 1996; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; see also Lambe, Hamilton-Giachchritsis, Garner & Walker, 2016).

Narcissism Individual differences variable characterized by extremely high but insecure levels of self-esteem.

However, putting aside their tendency to be more aggressive, narcissists tend to be psychologically healthy. Specifically, narcissism is negatively related to sadness, depression, anxiety and loneliness, and positively related to happiness and satisfaction. The reason narcissism is positively associated with psychological wellbeing is not that it is good for you, but that it is associated with normal or high self-esteem, which, as we have seen, *is* good for you (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg Kumashiro & Rusbult, 2004). The relationship between narcissism and psychological wellbeing is, therefore, a classic example of a **spurious correlation** produced by their mutual relation to self-esteem. However, although the relationship is spurious, it nonetheless tells you that the average narcissist is likely to enjoy better psychological health than the average person who is not a narcissist. There is no need to feel sorry for them.

Spurious correlation When two variables have no direct connection but it is wrongly inferred they do, because of coincidence or the presence of a third (unseen) factor.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

The narcissism 'epidemic' and its consequences

Narcissism, or excessive love of oneself, is said to be rife in US culture, according to social psychologists Jean Twenge and Keith Campbell (2009), who argue that narcissistic personality traits (e.g., overconfidence, vanity, materialism, lack of consideration for others) are turning America into a nation of egomaniacs, with potentially disastrous consequences.

Twenge and Campbell argue that one of the main influences for this is parenting. For example, parents often tell their children they are the 'best' and they are 'special', which leads to overinflated feelings of self-worth. Children are also given more power in the home, such as what they have for dinner and what time they go to bed, than in previous generations. They also argue that celebrity culture has played an important role in the narcissism epidemic. For example, TV programmes such as *Big Brother* and *Love Island* seem to be a vehicle for narcissistic personalities to get noticed for doing very little. Next, they target social networking sites and the media. People can strategically present themselves in a positive light on apps like Instagram, showing only pictures where they look 'hot' and concealing less positive aspects of the self, such as unflattering photographs. Social media also allow users to 'show off' and favourably present themselves by displaying particular aspects of their identity such as their favourite bands, fashion shops and activities. Teenagers and adolescents use social networking sites so the narcissism epidemic may get to people very young. Finally, Twenge and Campbell argue that being able to obtain credit easily means that people can get a 'quick fix' and feel better off than they really are, at least until they have to pay off the credit card.

What are the consequences of narcissism? Narcissists are generally overconfident, think they are smarter than others and have a sense of entitlement. This has some positive consequences: narcissists are more likely to emerge as leaders from initially leaderless groups (Brunell et al., 2008), and even to head large organizations (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). One possible reason for this is that narcissists may be charismatic and especially adept at convincing people to share their inflated opinion of themselves. Although narcissists are not necessarily more creative, they are seen as more creative by others (as well as themselves, of course), largely because they pitch their ideas with more enthusiasm. Indeed, narcissists' enthusiasm and charisma means that, up to a point, groups containing narcissists produce more creative ideas (Goncalo, Flynn & Kim, 2010). Thus, narcissism may, in some sense, have social value, despite the unpleasant and selfish behaviour with which it is associated.

Photo by Elijah O'Donnell on Unsplash

On the downside, the overrepresentation of narcissists as CEOs does lead to an important, and largely unexamined, question. This is whether narcissism may have contributed to some of the spectacular and disastrous corporate failures we have witnessed globally. Because narcissists are unwilling to listen to dissenting opinions or heed warnings, and have an inflated sense of their abilities, it is reasonable to guess that narcissistic leadership has had something to do with recent disasters in the oil and banking industries (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Also, Twenge and Campbell argue that if narcissism continues to grow in US society, people will become more and more individualistic, focus only on themselves and harm other people in the process of achieving their own success.

Questions

1. Take a look at recent literature on the narcissism epidemic. For example, an article by Wetzel et al. (2017) examined college students' levels of narcissism in the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s, and found no evidence for the epidemic. Look at the measure they used and the reasons why they argue that the epidemic does not exist, or may even be declining. What do you think?
2. Most of the arguments relate to narcissism in America, but are other countries the same? Why/why not? Take a look at research by Vater, Moritz and Roepke (2018) who compared levels of narcissism in East and West Germany.
3. Do you think any of the other social ills of our age – excessive debt, corruption, street crime – may have anything to do with the narcissism epidemic?

SELF–PRESENTATION

The self we know is not always the self we present to others. Because what others think of us depends on the self we project, we often try to manage the impression we present to others. Also, the way we see ourselves is often constructed and influenced by interacting with other people. People constantly monitor their presentation of self in their interactions with others. This process is called **impression management** (Goffman, 1959). Specifically, people vary in the degree to which they engage in **self-monitoring** – how much they engage in self-presentation to others (Snyder, 1974). Research suggests that people who are high self-monitors tend to shape their behaviour to project the self they think is appropriate to their audience or situation. They are, therefore, *strategic* in their **self-presentation**. On the other hand, low self-monitors are less sensitive to situational demands and do not shape their behaviour in this way. Instead, they tend to be more *expressive* and less concerned with the perceived expectations of the audience. More generally, people also vary their impression management strategies depending on the situation they are in. For example, evidence suggests that people use different strategies to present the self, depending on whether they are in a public or private situation (e.g., Leary, 1995).

Impression management
People manage the self they present to others, so that they appear to others in the best possible light.

Self-monitoring
People control how they present themselves, depending on the person (individual differences) and the situation.

Self-presentation
People make deliberate efforts to create an impression (usually favourable) of themselves to others.

There are several motives that drive strategic self-presentation (e.g., Jones & Pittman, 1982):

1. to be seen as competent in the eyes of others (we talk more about enhancing self-image in the next section)
2. in an attempt to be liked by others
3. to make people believe we are dangerous, in order to keep them away
4. to be seen as morally respectable
5. to be seen as helpless and in need of sympathy, in order to gain others' pity.

Often, these strategies are effective (as we will see in Chapter 6 on persuasion) and other times they are not. Specifically, ingratiation in the form of flattery can make people seem less trustworthy and sometimes insincere and 'slimy' (Vonk, 1998). However, much of strategic self-presentation is geared towards managing the impressions of others.

Expressive self-presentation, on the other hand, is more about managing our impressions of ourselves (Schlenker, 1980). People behave towards others in ways that help them validate their perceptions of self. This may be reflected in who we choose as friends. For example, if you think of yourself as outgoing and sociable, it helps to have friends who think the same of you. Expressive self-presentation is important because it provides external confirmation about how one sees oneself.

Expressive self-presentation can also help people to change their behaviour. For example, Tice (1992) found that public behaviour is internalized more into the self-concept than behaviour performed privately. Tice asked participants to act as if they were emotionally stable or unstable. They were asked to do so in either a public or private context. It was found that people internalized the stable or unstable behaviour as part of the self more when the behaviour was performed publicly (Figure 2.10), indicating that the way we are seen by others is an important determinant in how we see ourselves – and also influences how our self-concept changes. Self-presenting as a good person makes us privately feel better about ourselves (Gergen, 1965), and pretending to be more sociable than we are makes us behave more sociably later (Schlenker, Dlugolecki & Doherty, 1994).

This process largely works through the processes specified by self-perception theory, which we came across earlier in this chapter. Just as we learn about others from observing behaviour, we learn about ourselves. It has an important application in counselling and clinical psychology, according to Kelly (2000). Kelly argues that a crucial goal in therapy is to construct a new, healthier self. In doing so, clients should engage in positive self-presentations, which can be

reinforced by the therapist. Controversially, Kelly (2000) argues that clients should therefore withhold information from their therapists if it too seriously undermines their effort to present themselves in a positive light. This might mean, for example, that they should conceal their dissatisfaction with the therapy, or even information about extremely unpleasant behaviours in which they have engaged that may have contributed to their current problems.

Kelly's (2000) conclusions have been hotly disputed by other researchers in social and clinical psychology (e.g., Arkin & Hermann, 2000). One reason for this is not just that honesty and openness have historically been regarded as essential for clients of psychotherapy, counselling and clinical psychology, but that clients may be mistaken about what constitutes shameful and stigmatizing behaviour. One way in which therapists can help clients to develop a more positive understanding of themselves is to help them see that their own actions and circumstances need not be shameful or stigmatizing – and to help them act differently in the future (Baumann & Hill, 2016; Hill, Gelso & Mohr, 2000). However, there is some evidence that at least circumstantially supports some of Kelly's (2000) arguments. For example, Braginsky and Braginsky (1967) found that institutionalized schizophrenics presented themselves as mentally healthy in interviews with psychiatrists if they thought the interview was designed to determine their suitability for a less secure ward with more facilities and freedom. In contrast, they presented themselves as mentally unhealthy if they thought the interview was about whether they should continue to be hospitalized (generally, this client group preferred to stay in the institution rather than confront life outside). Furthermore, the psychiatrists 'bought' these self-presentations, assessing clients' mental health according to whether they presented themselves as well or unwell. There is also evidence that presenting one's self as mentally healthy or unhealthy can be self-fulfilling, especially if one's self-presentations are confirmed by experts (McKillop & Schlenker, 1988). There are also studies showing that the number of self-disclosures a client makes during therapy is negatively associated with outcomes such as the smoothness of the session, and even recovery (Shapiro & Firth, 1987; Strassberg, Roback, Anchor & Abramowitz, 1975), whereas keeping secrets from therapists may be associated with quicker recovery (Kelly, 1998). Even if we do not accept Kelly's (2000) conclusion that keeping secrets is a good idea for clients, at the very least her analysis points to the importance of self-presentational processes in the context of psychotherapy.

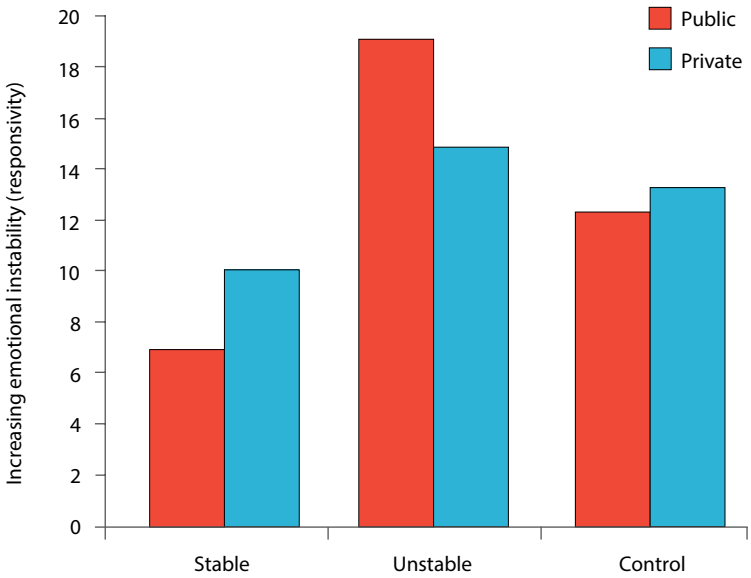

FIGURE 2.10 Public versus private self-presentation and the self-concept If behaviour is performed publicly (in front of other people) rather than privately, it is internalized more into the self-concept. Participants asked to act as if they were emotionally stable later rated themselves as more stable (that is, less unstable) than those who had acted as if they were emotionally unstable. However, this tendency was stronger among participants whose performance was public, rather than private. There was no public/private difference in the control condition.

Source: Data from Tice (1992)

HOW ACCURATE IS OUR SELF-KNOWLEDGE?

Thus far, we have learned much about the self. One of the key lessons from social psychological research is that it is useful to endeavour to take others' perspectives on ourselves. When we view ourselves as if from the outside, we are better able to regulate ourselves and meet the demands

of social situations. Our self-esteem responds to being liked and included, or disliked and rejected, by others, acting much like an internal mirror of ourselves. But exactly how well do we really know ourselves? Of course, in many senses you know more about yourself than anybody else does. You will be able to recall many facts about yourself, many of the places you have been and experiences you enjoy, more than anybody else. But how well do you really understand yourself? Just how reliable are your insights into your personality traits, your fears and desires, the reasons you do things, and the things you will do in the future? Social psychologists have amassed a vast body of evidence suggesting that our self-knowledge is surprisingly weak and unreliable. There appear to be two major sources of error in our self-knowledge: we are unable and, for various reasons, unwilling to know ourselves completely.

The limits of self-awareness

In an influential paper, Nisbett and Wilson (1977) argued that people have surprisingly poor self-knowledge and, in particular, no direct introspective access to their mental processes. When asked: 'Why do you like him?', 'How did you solve this problem' and 'Why did you take that job', people will typically answer quite freely. However, for Nisbett and Wilson (1977), it is doubtful that their answers will be any more reliable than those of an informed third party, that is, a person who has access to the same biographical facts. They cite a number of striking demonstrations of this lack of introspective awareness of our own thought processes:

- People appear not to notice when, or why, their attitudes change: Bem and McConnell (1970) showed that after writing an essay contrary to their own attitudes (that students should have no choice in their academic curriculum) their attitudes changed, as if they had persuaded themselves. But when asked what their attitudes had been before they wrote the essays, students incorrectly indicated that their previous attitudes had been the same as their new, more anti-choice ones. This basic finding has been replicated time and time again. For example, Douglas and Sutton (2004) gave anti-gun control and anti-environmentalist messages to their participants. Participants were influenced by these messages, but incorrectly guessed that their pre-message attitudes, which had been assessed two weeks before, were the same as their new ones. The same applies for conspiracy theories – people think that their attitudes are not changed by consuming such material, but it turns out that they are (Douglas & Sutton, 2008).
- People appear not to understand how situational factors affect their behaviour: Latane and Darley (1970) found that people were less likely to help a suffering stranger when they were in the company of other people. They reported that: 'We asked this question every way we know how: subtly, directly, tactfully, bluntly. Always we got the same answer. Subjects persistently claimed that their behaviour was not influenced by the other people present. This denial occurred in the face of results showing that the presence of others did inhibit helping' (p. 124).
- People appear not to understand why they like things: Nisbett and Wilson (1977) arranged nightgowns and stockings on a display within a retail store. Participants, who were told they were participating in a consumer survey, were asked to indicate which item was the best quality and why. Participants were heavily biased towards the items on the right, seeing them as the best quality, perhaps because attention is biased towards the right (Carruthers, 2010). However, when explaining why they picked out a given item of clothing as the highest quality, not one participant spontaneously mentioned its position within the display. When asked directly whether they may have preferred it because of its left/right position, all participants denied it.
- People believe their behaviour is influenced by factors that, in fact, do not influence it: Nisbett and Wilson (1977) found that an experimental group of participants wrongly thought that their enjoyment of a film was ruined by the noise of a power saw outside.

In fact, their ratings of the film were the same as a control group who watched the film without the distracting noise in the background. Another study makes much the same point. Have you ever been annoyed when someone lets slip what is going to happen at the end, and so ruins what would have been a suspenseful story? It seems that your annoyance may be misplaced. Leavitt and Christenfeld (2011) found that these 'spoilers' did not, in fact, reduce people's enjoyment of stories. In fact, quite the opposite was true: people enjoyed the 'spoiled' version of unfamiliar stories where the ending was revealed early, rather than the 'unspoiled' version of stories in which the ending was not revealed until, well, the end. In other words, people appear to enjoy stories more when they know what is coming. Nonetheless, we tend to believe, erroneously, that we will enjoy stories less under such conditions.

Perhaps the most famous demonstration of the limits of our self-awareness is the **Dunning-Kruger effect**, in which people with the lowest levels of ability seem to show the least self-awareness of their shortcomings (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). In the first studies to demonstrate this phenomenon, participants were presented with tests that examined their abilities in three different domains (humour, logical reasoning and English grammar). They were then asked to rate their ability in these areas, and to also rate their test performance (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). The researchers hypothesized that all participants would overestimate their ability and performance relative to objective criteria, but, crucially, that those who were most incompetent (i.e., who scored in the bottom 25 per cent of participants) would be most unaware that they had performed badly. Kruger and Dunning argued that this would happen because people who are incompetent in a domain also lack the skills that are necessary to evaluate competence (both their own and others') in that domain. That is, they lack the **meta-cognitive skills** to be able to tell when they (and others) have performed well or badly. To test this mechanism, Kruger and Dunning also examined people's ability to distinguish their correct from incorrect responses, and their ability to recognize the competence of other people.

Dunning-Kruger effect Cognitive bias in which people of low ability rate their ability as greater than it is.

Meta-cognitive skills Skills necessary to evaluate one's own, and others', competence in a particular domain.

Findings supported Kruger and Dunning's hypotheses. Across the three different domains, participants who scored in the lowest quartile on the tests overestimated their test performance and general ability. Overall, although their scores were in the 12th percentile, these participants estimated their abilities to put them in the 62nd percentile. Findings also supported the prediction that this effect was due to deficits in meta-cognitive skills. That is, people of low ability tended to overestimate their ability because they also lacked the ability to recognize their own ability. They were therefore unable to objectively judge their own competence (or in this case, incompetence).

The Dunning-Kruger effect has been demonstrated in a wide variety of domains, such as college course exams (Dunning, Johnson, Ehrlinger & Kruger, 2003), debating (Ehrlinger, Johnson, Banner, Dunning & Kruger, 2008), driving tests (Mynttinen et al., 2009), chess performance (Park & Santon-Pinto, 2010), computing knowledge (Gibbs, Moore, Steel & McKinnon, 2017) and political knowledge (Anson, 2018; see also Dunning, 2011 for a review). It appears that in domains where people are ignorant, they are also ignorant about their ignorance (i.e., they display meta-ignorance). The Dunning-Kruger effect can also be influenced by

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our attitudes. For example, one study recently showed that those who are the most opposed to genetically modified foods believe that they know the most about this topic, when in fact they know the least (Fernbach, Light, Scott, Inbar & Rozin, 2019).

A lot of other research, much of which we will encounter later in this book, demonstrates the surprising inaccuracy of judgements about the self. We appear to be unable to make especially accurate predictions about ourselves. For example, we appear to be worse, not better, than others at judging how long our romantic relationships will last. In a bias known as the **affective forecasting error**, we appear to overestimate the emotional impact that positive and negative life events will have on us. This may be connected to our inability to understand our own personality traits accurately. According to results obtained by Spain, Eaton and Funder (2000), for example, your own ratings of how neurotic you are predict your emotional reactions to future events less well than others' ratings of your neuroticism.

Affective forecasting error The tendency for people to overestimate the emotional impact that positive and negative events will have on them.

Another interesting line of research suggests that we may be wrong about something very fundamental about ourselves – the extent to which we have free will. Wegner (2002) argues that our conscious thoughts do not drive our behaviour. Instead, our behaviour is shaped by unconscious or automatic responses to the environment. Wegner argues that the experience of free will arises because our conscious thoughts about our actions are typically consistent with our actions, occur shortly before our actions, and in the absence of evidence that something other than our free choice could have caused us to act. Thus, it naturally feels to us that we are making conscious choices, even if we are actually deciding things unconsciously.

Wegner and Wheatley (1999) conducted an ingenious study to test this notion that free will is an illusion. They set up an Ouija-type board (the flat lettered board often used as part of a game to 'contact the spirit world') on top of a computer mouse. The participant and a confederate put their hands on top of the board and were instructed to use it together to move the mouse around the screen, stopping every 30 seconds or so. The participant and the confederate wore headphones, through which participants heard the name of one of the objects on the screen (e.g., 'swan'), either thirty seconds, five seconds or one second before, or one second after, the mouse had stopped. On some trials, the participants genuinely had control over where the mouse stopped. On other trials, unbeknown to participants, the confederate was instructed to stop on a certain object, meaning that, on these trials, the participant did not control where the mouse stopped (Figure 2.11).

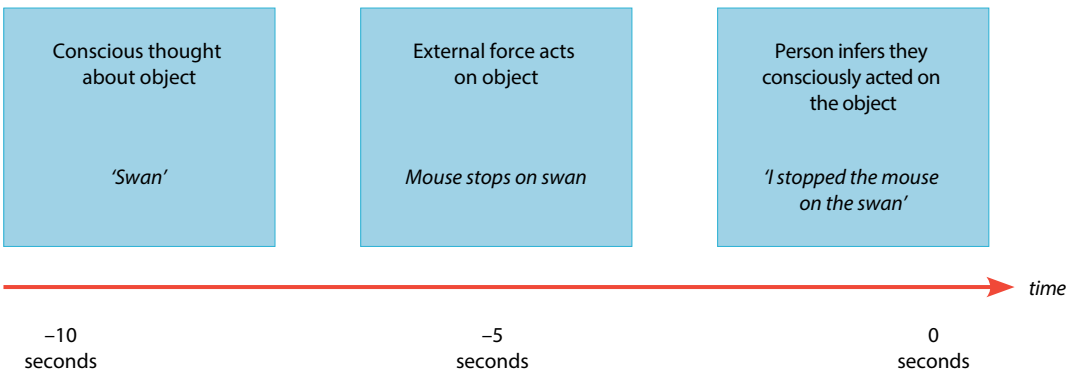

FIGURE 2.11 Illustration of the logic behind Wegner and Wheatley's (1999) experiment Hearing the word 'swan' triggered conscious thoughts about the object. When the confederate stopped the mouse at the picture of the swan on the screen a few seconds later, participants wrongly inferred that they themselves had intentionally done so. According to Wegner and Wheatley, this 'illusion of free will' mirrors everyday life. We consciously intend to do things, but our actions are driven largely by automatic psychological processes we are not conscious of. We think we have done things intentionally because our intentions tend to precede our actions, but, in reality, we are akin to a pilot who thinks they are in charge of a plane that is operating on autopilot.

Of most interest is the extent to which participants thought they had intentionally stopped the mouse on the named object, even in the trials in which they exerted no influence on when the mouse stopped. Reasonably enough, they tended not to think they had intentionally stopped the mouse on the named object when it was primed 30 seconds previously. But if it was named shortly before the mouse stopped – five or one second previously – the majority of participants indicated they had intentionally stopped the mouse. If they heard the object being named after the mouse stopped, they tended not to indicate they had consciously chosen to stop the mouse there. This experiment seems to suggest that people can be 'tricked' into believing they are exerting free will. Consistent with Wegner's theory of illusory conscious will, participants did not believe they had consciously chosen to stop the mouse when it rested on an object whose name they had not heard. It happened when what they heard triggered conscious thoughts about the object of their apparent action (the swan), shortly before they observed the mouse stop on that object.

This classic study has generated many experiments on the illusion of conscious choice, which have largely supported the claim that people can be 'tricked', or rather trick themselves, into believing their actions were the result of conscious choices. For Wegner, the upshot of this research is that our actions are largely decided unconsciously or automatically. Conscious thoughts accompany and precede our actions, to be sure, but these thoughts are not necessarily causally responsible for our actions. This is entirely consistent with the behaviourist tradition of psychology. For Watson, Skinner and other behaviourists, conscious thoughts were not responsible for our behaviour. Nonetheless, modern social psychologists, unlike the behaviourists, regard conscious thoughts as important and amenable to scientific study, and as we shall see in many of the chapters in this book, notably Chapters 3 and 4, our conscious thoughts and deliberations affect our emotional reactions to events. Over time, they can affect our automatic decision-making processes (in Chapter 12, we will see how, if people are consciously determined to be less racist, they can change even their unconscious or implicit racism). Consciously held, long-term plans and intentions also reliably (although not perfectly) predict our later behaviour. It is just that our conscious intentions do not always seem to drive our immediate behavioural choices in day-to-day life. Instead, unconscious responses, beliefs and even goals appear to drive much of our behaviour (Custers & Aarts, 2010; Marien, Custers & Aarts, 2018).

TIME TO REFLECT

Wegner and Wheatley's (1999) study highlights a case where people think they have intentionally done something, whereas in fact they have not. Does this really show that in the normal course of our everyday lives, we are wrong to suppose that our conscious intentions are not responsible for our behaviour? Do you think perhaps their experiment simply hijacks or 'tricks' a process that normally leads us to correctly infer we have intentionally done things?

All this is not to say that people have no knowledge of themselves. There is a good chance that your ratings of your own personality (e.g., how extraverted you are) or behaviour (e.g., how often you tell jokes to lighten a tense moment) will correlate with the ratings of people who know you (Funder, 1995; Gosling, John, Craik & Robins, 1998). To some extent, we appear able, as symbolic interactionists like Mead (1934) and Cooley (1902) suggested, to see ourselves as others see us. However, our agreement with others is not perfect. Some studies have found that our self-ratings correlate more highly with how we think others see us, rather than with how they actually see us (Kenny & DePaulo, 1993). The mirror, or 'looking glass', that Cooley (1902) described is our own creation, reflecting our assumptions about how others see us.

Effective social functioning depends on this bearing some relation to how others actually see us, but we do not do this perfectly.

The key issue is not whether our self-knowledge is perfect, but where it comes from. By and large, there is surprisingly little evidence that we have special insight into our traits or motivations. We learn and make inferences about ourselves, much as we do about people. As self-perception theory points out, we rely on the same observations of behaviour (Carruthers, 2010). If we are more expert on our own behaviour, motivations and preferences than others, it is probably because we have access to more facts about, and observations of, ourselves.

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Why social psychologists cannot just ask people why they do things

Nisbett and Wilson's (1977) findings have profound implications for how social psychological research needs to be conducted. As you read this textbook, you will notice all sorts of clever experiments designed to find out why people do things. You will see subtle measures of attitudes, especially in Chapter 4, that avoid asking people directly what they think about themselves, others or social issues, or why they think that way. When social psychologists do ask people why they do things, it is not normally because they want to find out the real reasons why they did them. It is because they are interested in why people come up with certain reasons for their own behaviour, and what effect their explanations of their behaviour has on the way they think, feel and behave (see Chapter 3). There is a fundamental distrust in social psychology of the validity of self-reports and, in particular, self-reported reasons for behaviour.

It is worth reflecting on this. Social psychology would be a lot simpler if we could just ask people why they do things. There would be no need for expensive, difficult to design, time-consuming experiments. But, social psychologists' distrust of people's insights into their own behaviour is not shared by most people. In everyday life, people still tend to ask each other what led them to make interesting or important choices in their lives. We (your authors) have done some consultancy work on social psychological aspects of environmental issues, and were constantly amazed at clients' willingness to rely on survey and focus group results in which people are asked questions like: 'What kind of message would get you to reduce your energy use?' People simply cannot give accurate answers to questions like this; indeed, in Chapter 15, we will encounter research by Nolan, Schultz, Cialdini, Goldstein and Griskevicius (2008) that shows that people are completely wrong about what kind of energy use campaign would influence them.

However, this distrust in the accuracy of people's self-reports does not mean that they or people's experience and self-understanding more generally should be dismissed. Many of the mainstream experimental findings we review in this chapter reveal just how important people's accounts of their behaviour are to their psychological health and relationships. Entire qualitative research methods are devoted to uncovering the content and structure of everyday experience, and the meaning of the narratives they produce (e.g., Larkin, Shaw & Flowers, 2018; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Generally speaking, however, these methods are premised on a radical degree of scepticism about the extent to which people's accounts are accurate records of the psychological processes underlying their behaviour. What people say is assumed to reflect what they are experiencing, or perhaps how they are trying to present and justify themselves to others (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). It is not supposed to reflect introspective insight into the 'real' causes of their behaviour.

Questions

1. In what domains might self-report responses be appropriate and when might they be inappropriate?
2. Think of some of the core topics in social psychology. In which of these would self-report responses be likely to yield dishonest or misleading responses?

MOTIVATED SOCIAL COGNITION AND THE SELF

Motivated social cognition Acquisition, processing and storage of information that is motivated and affected by goals (Kunda, 1990). A person's goal may be simply to be accurate, and motivated social cognition leads them to unbiased conclusions. However, the term 'motivated social cognition' normally refers to social cognition that is biased by goals. In other words, the processes by which 'people are capable of believing what they want to believe' (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski & Sulloway, 2003).

Thus far, we have seen how important the self is. It organizes our experience, allows us to interact meaningfully with others, and shapes our emotions and behaviour. We have seen that some types of self-concept are more useful than others. For example, by and large, we are able to feel and function better if our self-esteem is reasonably high rather than low. In short, people have a vested interest in their self-concepts. It is not surprising, therefore, that people are strategic in the way they seek out, pay attention to, process and remember information about themselves. In short, people engage in **motivated social cognition** about themselves. We return to motivated social cognition more generally in Chapter 3, but for now, it is useful to familiarize yourself with four of the motivations that influence social cognition (Baumeister, 1998; Kruglanski, 1990; Kunda, 1990):

1. to find out more about a topic, so as to increase our ability to understand, predict and control the world we live in
2. to protect or enhance our self-esteem
3. to ensure cognitive consistency – that our beliefs are consistent with each other and with facts about the world as we know them
4. to feel that we are in control of the world in which we live (Table 2.1).

Self-assessment

Self-assessment The motivation to know objectively who we are.

First, we are motivated to know objectively and accurately who we are. This is the motive of **self-assessment** (Trope, 1986). This motive is important because having an accurate understanding of the self can enable an individual to be certain of their abilities and how they might act or perform in specific situations. For example, you may like to complete online personality and intelligence tests. In doing so, you are fulfilling your motive of self-assessment, and as a result – depending on the quality of the test – you have a greater understanding of yourself. It does not matter if the information we learn about ourselves is favourable or unfavourable. The key is that we have accurate and valid information about the self.

Self-verification

Self-verification The motivation to seek out information that confirms one's view of the self.

Another motive regarding the self is to confirm what we believe to be true about ourselves. This motivation is called **self-verification** (e.g., Kwang & Swann, 2010; Swann, 1997) and people seek to do this, again, irrespective of whether the views about the self are positive or negative. We seek information that verifies our beliefs about ourselves. If we find it, we feel reassured

TABLE 2.1 Four key goals in motivated social cognition, as they apply to the self

Motivation	When the topic is the self	Example of process	Example of outcome
Accuracy motivation	Self-assessment	Completing online personality tests; seeking honest feedback from friends	Finding out more about yourself
Self-esteem motivation	Self-enhancement	Thinking you are better than average – the above-average effect	Having unduly positive views of yourself
Cognitive consistency	Self-verification	Choosing friends whose behaviour towards you is consistent with your high (or low) self-esteem	Reinforcing your previous self-view; avoiding disconfirming feedback
Affirming control	Illusion of control	Attributing random or uncontrollable events to your own actions	Confidence, but also disaster

that our perception of our self is consistent with our experience, in other words, that we have achieved cognitive consistency (e.g., Swann, Rentfrow & Guinn, 2003). This leads to some surprising and even disturbing outcomes for people who have low self-esteem (for a review, see Chang & Swann, 2012). For example, in their quest to verify their negative views of themselves, they will actually prefer the company of people who have a low (rather than high) opinion of them (Swann, Stein-Seroussi & Giesler, 1992), will become less committed to their marriage if praised by their spouse (Swann, Hixon & De La Rhonde, 1992), will be upset by their successes (Wood, Heimpel, Newby-Clark & Ross, 2005), show signs of cardiovascular stress if praised (Ayduk, Mendes, Akinola & Gyurak, 2008), and will be more likely to be absent from work after being effusively praised by their boss (Wiesenfeld, Swann, Brockner & Bartel, 2007). Wood, Perunovic and Lee (2010) found that people will even be saddened by saying positive things about themselves, such as 'I am a lovable person', and thus they conclude that, tragically, the popular technique of affirmation – boosting self-esteem by saying positive things about oneself – is likely to backfire for the very people who need it most. Self-affirmation can also sometimes increase anxiety and stress rather than decrease them (Jessop, Ayers, Burn & Ryda, 2018).

Self-enhancement

Self-enhancement The motivation to seek out information that allows one to see one's self in a positive light.

Arguably the most important motive is to search for information that allows us to see the self positively. This motive is called **self-enhancement** (Kunda, 1990). People seek new, positive information about the self and they also seek ways to alter existing negative views of the self. There are various strategies that people use to enhance the self. An important means of enhancing is 'behavioural self-handicapping' (Jones & Berglas, 1978). Failure at a task presents some evidence that a person is not good at it. To protect themselves from this conclusion, people sometimes act in ways that sabotage their own chances of success. If you stayed up late partying before that test, and go on to fail the test, you can conclude that your bad preparation, rather than low ability, is to blame. If you manage to do well on the test, you can convince yourself that you are especially clever, because you did so despite the late night (Rhodewalt, Morf, Hazlett & Fairfield, 1991). Research shows that self-handicapping is used strategically (Eyink, Hurt, Hendrix & Galante, 2017), does protect self-views (McCrea & Hirt, 2001), but comes at a price. Naturally enough, self-handicapping harms people's actual performance (Zuckerman & Tsai, 2005).

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Self-serving attribution bias Self-other bias, whereby people make internal attributions for positive aspects of the self but external attributions for negative aspects of the self.

There are many other manifestations of self-enhancement. To give you just a sample, we have put together a list:

- People evaluate feedback about the self less critically, and accept it more readily, when it is positive rather than negative. This applies to IQ tests (Wyer & Frey, 1983) and medical diagnoses (e.g., Ditto, Munro, Apanovitch Scepansky & Lockhart, 2003).
- People take credit for their successes and deflect blame for their failures, in the **self-serving attribution bias** (Arkin, Cooper & Kolditz, 1980; Zuckerman, 1979). For example, after car accidents, people frequently make absurdly self-serving attributions such as: 'the tree came up and obstructed my view of the road' (Stewart, 2005).

- People recognize themselves in photographs more readily if their image is morphed to make them more attractive, rather than less attractive (Epley & Whitchurch, 2008). They underestimate their own body size compared to how they estimate others' (Mazzurega, Marisa, Zampini & Pavini, 2018).
- People in countries as diverse as Australia, Germany, Japan and Israel see themselves as not only better people, but more human, than the average person (Loughnan et al., 2010).
- People generally evaluate themselves more favourably than others evaluate them. This applies to anything from ratings of their personality traits (Alicke, 1985), to the popularity and attractiveness of their profiles on online dating services (Preuss & Alicke, 2009).
- Logically, fewer than 50 per cent of the population can be better than average at something. Yet, a study by Svenson (1981) showed that 69 per cent of a sample of Swedish drivers, and 93 per cent of American drivers, thought they were better drivers than usual. Similar results have been found with many other dimensions of value aside from driving behaviour. Williams and Gilovich (2008) found that this is not just a matter of bragging. Participants were willing to bet real money that they had scored better than average on a personality test.

These motives are all important in guiding how people behave. But which is the most important? Of course, if self-esteem is high, and warranted, these motives are compatible with each other. But often, the truth hurts. And when self-esteem is low, self-verification is completely at odds with self-enhancement. Some studies suggest that self-enhancement is the most important motive, but that self-verification is also a genuine social motive (e.g., Sedikides, 1993). However, comprehensive reviews suggest that self-verification is as or more important than self-enhancement (Kwang & Swann, 2010; van Dellen, Campbell, Hoyle & Bradfield, 2011).

Illusion of control

Can you remember a situation in your life in which you felt you had no control over what was happening to you? Chances are, the feeling of a lack of control induced anxiety, even if the

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experience was essentially positive. Human beings appear to have a strong desire, and even a need, for control. People with an internal *locus of control* feel they are in charge of events in their lives, and experience higher levels of wellbeing than people with an *external locus of control,* who think events are not strongly controlled by them. Field experiments have shown that residents of care homes for the elderly are happier, more functional and may even live longer when given a higher degree of control over their schedules and the day-to-day events in their lives (Langer & Rodin, 1976).

We appear to uphold our beliefs in our control over events by overestimating the extent of our control. Langer (1975), for example, showed that people prefer to roll a dice rather than have someone roll it for them, as if they could exercise control over the outcome. We have already encountered one social cognitive process that helps produce this illusion of control. Remember how Wegner and Wheatley (1999) showed that people thought they were responsible for stopping the mouse on an object like a swan in their 'Ouija board' experiment, because they were made to think about the swan shortly before the confederate stopped the mouse. As we will see in Chapter 3, this same bias can cause people to think they may have hurt someone via a voodoo hex, or influenced the outcome of a sports match they are watching on TV (Pronin, Wegner, McCarthy & Rodriguez, 2006). As we shall also see in Chapter 3, depriving people of control causes them to restore a sense of control in surprising ways.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Why do human beings have such a need to control, or at least to feel like they are controlling, the environment? Is it culturally universal? Try using Google Scholar or a similar search engine as we have previously suggested. For example, you might like to try combining the term 'illusion of control' (remember to put quotation marks around a phrase, or if using advanced search options, indicate you are searching the exact phrase), and 'culture' in one search, and 'evolution' in another search. What can you find out about the origins of the need for control?

CULTURE AND THE SELF

As we have seen in this chapter, the self is a unique aspect of every individual. However, it is also the case that there are cultural differences in people's self-concept. In particular, researchers have focused on differences in the self-concept depending on whether individuals come from individualist or collectivist cultures, and whether people belong to one or more cultures.

Individualist and collectivist cultures

Individualist cultures, such as in Western and Northern Europe and some of the countries they colonized (e.g., Australia and the USA), emphasize personal achievement and uniqueness of the self. In such cultures, children from an early age are encouraged to think of themselves as distinct and unique individuals, focusing on the aspects of themselves, such as their inner thoughts and feelings, that make them different from other people. On the other hand, collectivist cultures, such as in many Eastern European and Asian countries, place more emphasis on groups and families. From a young age, children are encouraged to follow societal norms and be loyal and obedient to their parents. This more interdependent conception of the self is based on one's relationships with others and one's connection with families and social groups. The way people see the self is therefore different in these two different types of culture. Specifically, individualist cultures have a more individual-oriented sense of self, whereas the self is defined in collectivist cultures more in line with group memberships (Gaertner, Sedikides & Graetz, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Kitayama, 2016; Vignoles, Chryssouchoou & Breakwell, 2000).

This can be seen in Figure 2.12. A male student from an individualistic culture, such as Norway, the UK, France or Australia, will typically see himself as close to, but separate from, significant others in his life (Figure 2.12a). On the other hand, his counterpart in a collectivist culture, such as southern Italy, Portugal and Greece, or an Indigenous Australian, will partly define himself in terms of his relationships with others (Figure 2.12b). In an important sense, these people are part of him. He will even attribute their personality traits to himself (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). It is important not to overemphasize this cultural difference; it is a reliable, but not necessarily a large, difference (Nisbett Peng, Choi & Norenzayan, 2001). Individuals within cultures differ as much, if not more, as cultures differ from each other in the extent to which independent versus interdependent self-construals are adopted. Nonetheless, this is one important way to understand cultural differences (e.g., Vauclair & Fischer, 2011).

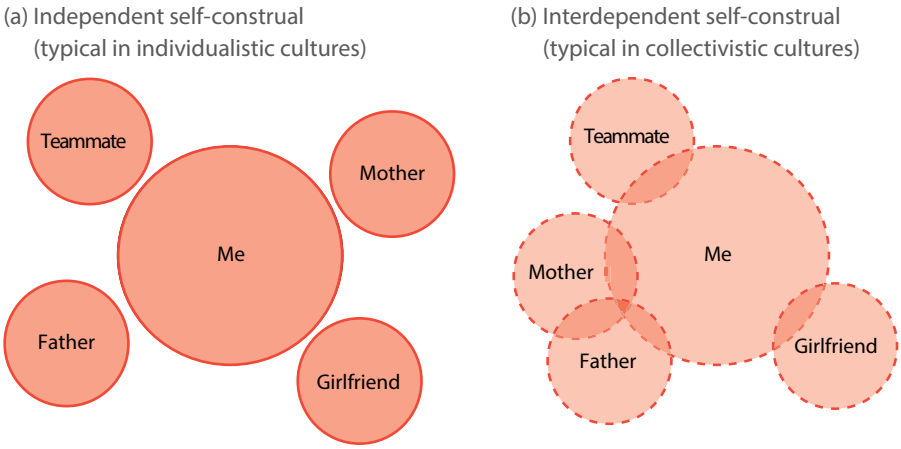

FIGURE 2.12 Independent and interdependent self-construals These self-construals might be typical of male students in an individualistic culture versus a collectivist culture.

The differences in the self-concept have been demonstrated widely by social psychologists and cross-cultural psychologists. For example, Trafimow, Triandis and Goto (1991) asked participants from the USA and China to write down 20 descriptions of themselves. They found that US participants wrote down many more individual-related descriptions (e.g., 'I am an intelligent person') than the participants from China, who tended to write about the self more in relation to group memberships (e.g., 'I am a Christian'). Similar studies exist comparing Japanese and Canadian participants (Heine & Lehman, 1997), Hong Kong Chinese and Americans (Yik, Bond & Paulhus, 1998) and others comparing Japanese and Americans (Regan, Snyder & Kassin, 1995).

In a way, people raised in individualist cultures learn that life involves many opportunities for self-enhancement, whereas for people raised in collectivist cultures, life provides opportunities for self-improvement (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto & Norasakkunkit, 1997). It is interesting to note, for example, that in Japanese, the word for 'self' (jibun) means 'one's portion of the shared space' (Hamaguchi, 1985).

Research has also demonstrated that people's self-descriptions vary as a function of the culture, the situation and the interaction between the two (Kanagawa, Cross & Markus, 2001). As in other research, Kanagawa et al. demonstrated significant differences in the ways in which Japanese and US students described themselves. Japanese students were more likely to express a self-critical orientation and a motivation for self-improvement (e.g., 'I get tense in public', 'I am not able to play a musical instrument'). The US students, on the other hand, were more likely to express unique and positive aspects of the self that are stable over time and across situations (e.g., 'I am good at maths', 'I am considered good at sports'). However, Japanese participants were more likely to describe themselves with specific reference to their appearance, activities, the immediate situation and their possessions, than their US counterparts.

Insights into the different nature of self across cultures have also been gained from qualitative studies of individual experiences. For example, Kondo, an ethnically Japanese woman born and raised in the USA, reports an interaction with her landlady when she was later working in Japan (cited in Wetherell & Maybin, 1996). The landlady reflected on the Japanese treating themselves as individuals as less important than the collective, doing things for the sake of social relationships. This struck Kondo as a 'profoundly different way of thinking about relationships between selves and the social world' (Kondo, cited in Wetherell & Maybin, 1996, p. 272).

The cultural differences in how people perceive the self are also reflected in different cultural values between individualist and collectivist cultures. For example, Gardner, Gabriel and Lee (1999) investigated the link between how people see the self and their values. In one study, they asked participants from the USA to read a story which either primed individualist aspects of the self (by including words like 'I' and 'me') or more collectivist aspects (by including words like 'us' and 'we'). After reading the story, participants were asked to write 20 self-descriptions and then rate the values that were important to them. Findings revealed that participants in the individualist prime condition wrote more individual-oriented self-descriptions and more strongly endorsed individualist values like personal freedom and independence. On the other hand, the participants who were in the collectivist prime condition wrote more group-oriented self-descriptions and more strongly endorsed collectivist values like family and obedience. The significant differences in endorsement of individual and collectivist values are presented in Figure 2.13.

Bicultural individuals
Individuals who are able to deal with the presence of two cultural identities (heritage and host cultural identities) at the same time.

Bicultural individuals are an interesting case of cultural influences on the self-concept. Such individuals are able to deal with two different cultures at once – the host culture where they live, and their original (immigrant or heritage) culture where they are from (Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990). Often, the two cultures vary significantly in terms of values, attitudes and norms. For example, a person from China who now lives in the USA may be considered bicultural if they are able to integrate aspects of both cultures into their self-concept. Of course, not everyone can do this. Some individuals maintain a strong heritage culture despite living among a different culture for most of their lives. However, many people are able to integrate two cultures into their self-concept. Yamada and Singelis (1999) argue that people are able to do this when they alternate their cultural orientation depending on the situation. Specifically, an individual is able to deal with two identifies at once when they understand the ways in which each culture guides behaviour, and uses this knowledge to think and behave accordingly in different situations. In a demonstration of how this works, Hong, Morris, Chiu and Benet-Martínez (2000) found that Chinese/American bicultural individuals changed their behaviour depending on whether they were primed with Western or Asian cues. Indeed, there are benefits to being able to integrate two cultures. For example, successful bicultural individuals are thought to have better mental health (Rogler, Cortes & Malgady, 1991), be better adjusted (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013), and have better general wellbeing (Chu, White & Verelli, 2017) and higher self-esteem than monocultural individuals. They also less likely to report interethnic conflict or experience racial tension (Schwarzer, Bowler & Rauch, 1985).

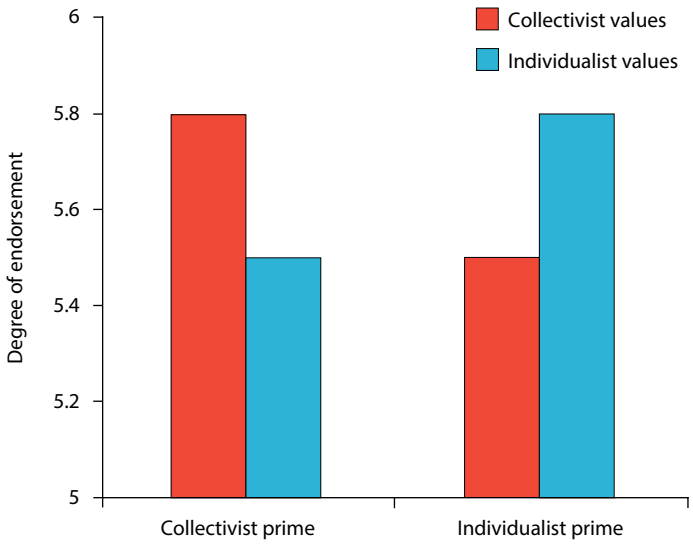

FIGURE 2.13 Collectivists and individualists compared
Participants primed with individualist concepts endorsed individualist values rather than collectivist values, while those primed with collectivist concepts endorsed more collectivist values than individualist values.

Source: Data from Gardner et al. (1999)

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Take a look at the Student Project on page 659 by Mollie Dale from Aberystwyth University. Mollie examined how photoshopped images of women in the media influence women's body esteem. Her experimental research is relevant to our discussions about self-esteem in this chapter. It is also relevant to the research on media persuasion in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have outlined how social psychologists have approached the study of the self. We have discussed what the self is, what the self is for, and how the self defines and influences what we think, feel and do. The key points to take away from this chapter are as follows:

- The self-concept is the complete set of beliefs that people have about themselves. It comprises self-schemas, or different aspects of the self.
- Schemas help determine how people think, feel and behave in specific situations. Different schemas are activated in different contexts, and people may be chronically schematic or aschematic on a particular dimension.
- According to multiple role theory, it is beneficial for people to have multiple identities. Also, however, self-concept clarity (i.e., a clear sense of a strongly defined self) bolsters self-esteem and helps people deal with negative events.
- Self-awareness is the psychological state of being aware of one's characteristics, feelings and behaviours, or the awareness of oneself as unique. Public self-awareness occurs when people become aware of how they could be judged by others. Public self-consciousness is a more chronic state of being concerned about being evaluated by others. Private self-awareness refers to the state where an individual is aware of the private, personal aspects of the self. This too can be chronic in the case of private self-consciousness.
- There is a biological basis of self-awareness. Regions of the frontal lobe are activated during tasks where participants process information about the self.
- Several theories address the self and its functions, including self-perception theory, self-discrepancy theory, regulatory focus theory, the control theory of self-regulation, the strength model of self-control and social comparison theory.
- Self-esteem is the subjective evaluation of the self as positive or negative, and develops in childhood. Self-esteem is affected by factors from within the self (e.g., positive self-schemas) or outside others (e.g., acceptance or inclusion by others).
- Having high self-esteem can have positive consequences. It helps people to regulate their mood. Self-esteem buffers people against the anxiety of death. This is particularly strong if people are implicitly aware of their own self-worth. Higher levels of self-esteem also make people less aggressive. However, exceedingly high levels of self-esteem (narcissism) can entail insecurity about the self, but narcissists are generally psychologically healthier than people with lower levels of self-esteem.
- People often try to manage the impression they present to others, through a process known as impression management.
- Self-knowledge is often inaccurate. For many reasons, people appear both unable and unwilling to know themselves completely. They also tend to overestimate the emotional impact that positive and negative life events will have, through the affective forecasting error.

- The self-concept is an important guiding principle in motivating what we do. We are motivated to accurately know ourselves (self-assessment), confirm what we believe to be true about ourselves (self-verification) and see ourselves positively (self-enhancement).
- Important cultural differences exist with respect to the self. Specifically, individualist cultures express the independent, unique aspects of the self, whereas collectivist cultures emphasize the self in terms of groups and belonging. Bicultural individuals successfully manage their membership of two different cultures at once.

Our focus in this chapter has been on people's understanding of who they are. As you will read throughout this book, our understanding of the self affects much of social life, and our understanding of the self is closely tied to our other identities (covered in Chapter 8). In Chapter 3, we turn our focus to how people understand others.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. What are the consequences (both positive and negative) of the different types of self-awareness and self-consciousness?
2. How do people cope when they don't 'stack up' compared to someone else? Answer with reference to research on social comparisons.
3. How well do we really know ourselves?

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Encouraging healthy eating in a school

Imagine you work for a school that is trying to encourage kids to eat in a more healthy way. Your school has a 'tuck shop' that sells meals and snacks to children. Children at your school tend to buy salty, fatty and sweet snacks rather than fruit and other healthy alternatives.

1. Your head teacher suggests that you survey the children and ask them why they buy the foods they do. Based on the material you have read in this chapter (e.g., in the Ethics and Research Methods box), what do you think you can and cannot learn by following this approach? What approaches would you suggest?
2. Some children report that they would really like to buy healthier foods, but by the time they go to buy their food, they are already feeling tired and find it difficult to stick to their resolve to make the right choices. What psychological processes in this chapter may help to explain their difficulty? And what solutions might you be able to propose, based on these principles?
3. Like most schools, yours has a variety of children, ranging from those who are healthy and athletic and eat well, and those who fall a long way short of these standards. Your head teacher would like to highlight especially healthy children, recognizing their choices at assemblies, and so use them as 'role models' for the other children. Based on what you've read about processes such as social comparison, what are the merits and dangers of this approach? If your school were to go ahead with such a role model scheme, what steps would you take to enhance the likelihood that it will succeed, rather than backfire?
4. One possible approach to helping children make the right choices might involve simply mounting small mirrors among the shelves in the tuck shop, so that children can 'see themselves' as they make their choices. Why might this help, and why might it backfire? (see, for example, the section on self-awareness in this chapter.)

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources including videos and self-test multiple choice questions to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

Dufner, M., Gebauer, J.E., Sedikides, C., & Dennnisen, J.J.A. (2019). Self-enhancement and psychological adjustment: A meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *23*, 48–72. Up-to-date meta-analytic review of the research on self-enhancement, focusing on the benefits and pitfalls of maintaining positive self-views.

Leary, M.R. (2007). Motivation and emotional aspects of the self. *Annual Review of Social Psychology, 58*, 317–44. Covers theory and research on the self-related motives covered in this chapter (e.g., self-enhancement, self-verification) and self-related emotions, with a focus on the self and social wellbeing.

Markus, H.R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion and motivation. *Psychological Bulletin, 98*, 224–53. Classic and influential article discussing the different ways in which people construe the self dependent on their culture.

Sedikides, C., & Spencer, S.J. (Eds.). (2007). *The self*. New York: Psychology Press. Two of the world's leading researchers on the self provide a review of the literature.

Twenge, J.M. (2014). *Generation me – revised and updated: Why today's young Americans are more confident, assertive and entitled – and more miserable than ever before*. New York: Simon and Schuster. Overview and extension of Twenge's narcissism epidemic argument in 2009. Discusses the effects that millenials are having on American society.

Vohs, K.D., & Baumeister, R.F. (Eds.). (2016). *Handbook of self-regulation: Research, theory and applications* (3rd ed). New York: Guilford Press. In-depth coverage of many of the topics we have discussed in this chapter (e.g., self-control, self-regulation, ego depletion) by experts in the field.

CHAPTER 3 THE SOCIAL PERCEIVER: UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL WORLD

In this chapter, we consider two key social cognitive processes – how people explain events in their lives (causal attribution), and how they form impressions of other people (person perception). We discuss some common errors in social cognition and then consider the nature (and 'social nature') of social cognition. By the end of this chapter, you will have an understanding of people's capacities and limitations in social cognition and social thinking.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Causal attributions
- The naive scientist approach
- Two famous 'errors' in attribution
- Applications of attribution theory
- Person perception
- Heuristics and biases in social cognition
- Other biases and errors in social cognition
- The nature of social cognition

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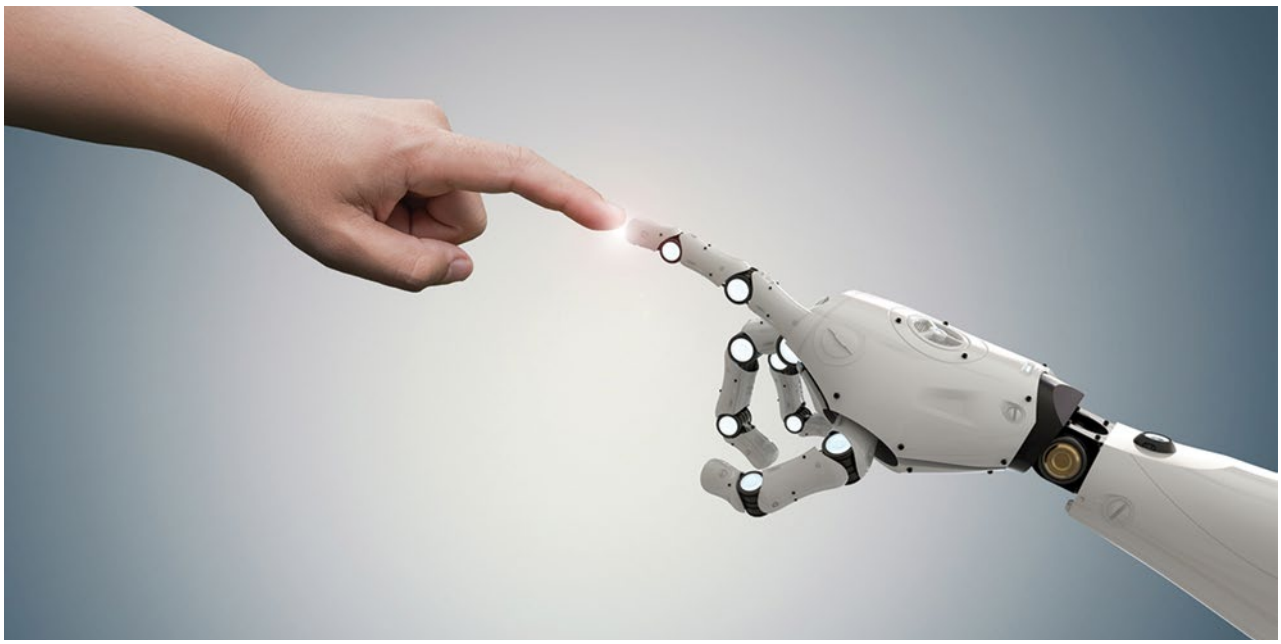
Computers are our creations, but they can already do many things we cannot. They can perform billions of calculations a second. The most powerful computers are capable of beating any human being at chess (Campbell, Hoane & Hsu, 2002). They can simulate and predict the movements of the stars through the heavens, and the entire world's climate. They can calculate pi (π) to hundreds of decimal places. Even the relatively humble, average desktop computer can easily store more facts and figures than are contained in the world's most comprehensive sets of encyclopedias, and as long as it functions properly, it will never 'forget' them. In contrast, many, if not most of us struggle to multiply or divide numbers greater than a few digits long, or remember nine- or ten-digit numbers (e.g., Cokely et al., 2018).

So, are we being overshadowed by our creations? Are we less capable than we think we are? In our defence, the human brain is the most complex structure in the known universe (Edelman, 1993). It is capable of things that psychologists, working as we do in a relatively young science, are only beginning to understand. Despite the dazzling power of computers, they are inadequate at performing some of the tasks most of us can do effortlessly, day after day. For example, it is only recently that computer-controlled robots have begun to be able to walk up and down stairs, or recognize faces and voices (Daudelin et al., 2018).



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One of the most vivid illustrations of our superiority to computers is their complete failure, thus far, to pass a deceptively simple test of artificial intelligence. This test was designed by Alan Turing, the brilliant mathematician, whose codebreaking work at Bletchley Park was instrumental in the defeat of Nazi Germany in the Second World War. Turing (1950) argued that we could judge a computer to be truly intelligent if people, after conversing by text with a remote computer for a few minutes, could not tell whether it was a computer or a human being. In the intervening seven decades, no computer has got anywhere near passing the Turing test. This is not for lack of trying. The Loebner Prize is an annual competition in which programs are put through their paces (Saygin, Cicekli & Akman, 2000; Klopfenstein, Delpriori, Malatini & Bogliolo, 2017). Although computers have been getting roughly twice as powerful every 18 months or so, it will almost certainly be many years before any will be 'clever' enough to pass this test.

The fact that holding a simple conversation is something that supercomputers find impossible, but we generally find easy, illustrates the enormous social cognitive complexity that underpins successful social interaction. Although most of us experience awkwardness in some social situations, we generally find tasks such as holding a basic conversation to be so effortless that we rarely stop to think about how we are doing it. Crucially, even if we did, it is unlikely we would be able to work out *exactly* how we are achieving the marvellous trick of social interaction. This is because, as we shall see in this chapter, many of the psychological processes that make social interactions possible are performed outside conscious awareness.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Go online and try a Turing test – chat online with a computer. We recommend you chat to Mitsuku, winner of the Loebner Prize in 2017 and 2018, and thus, at that time, the single most convincing attempt to design a computer system that mimicks human beings. Search for 'Mitsuku' and 'Loebner' and you'll soon find it. How long in your conversation does it take to work out that you are not conversing with a human being? What tricks does it look like Mitsuku is using to come up with responses to your statements? How do these tricks differ from what a human being would do? Note that although Mitsuku is officially the state of the art in conversational AI, it was rated by judges in the 2018 Loebner Prize as scoring 33 per cent, where a score of 100 per cent means that a program seems fully human. By now, you are probably used to dealing with AI 'assistants' like Apple's Siri, Microsoft's Cortana, or Amazon's Alexa. These usually seem to be far more convincing than the likes of Mitsuku – why do you think this is? If you find this interesting, you might also like to find out about the life story of Alan Turing by searching for him, and even read his 1950 paper 'Computing machinery and intelligence', which is widely posted online, and remains interesting and easy to read (and for a critical reaction, see Searle, 1990).

Fortunately, we do not have to rely simply on introspection to understand how our social minds work. A variety of ingenious scientific methodologies have been developed to identify the enormous extent, and the limits, of our insights into other people's minds, personalities and behaviour. Some of these studies have revealed ever more stunning powers of social cognition by ordinary people who, in other respects, are inferior to computers. For example, later in this chapter we will learn how people of ordinary intelligence can judge significantly better than chance, just by looking at a complete stranger for a few seconds, or even milliseconds, whether they are likeable, attractive, trustworthy, extraverted or whether they have a personality disorder. To a surprising degree, and with amazing, effortless speed, people appear to be able to judge a book by its cover.

As interesting and inspiring as it is to discover the fabulous powers possessed by the average person, knowing *what* they can do, alone, does not tell us *how* they do it. Advances by social psychologists over the past few decades have begun to unravel the psychological mechanisms that make our social lives possible. Understanding these powers does not make them any less fabulous, but it does make them less mysterious. A critical part of this research process has been to show that as remarkable as people's talents are, they are also fallible. Working out when and why people get things wrong provides vital clues to understand how it is they are able to get so many things right.

The case of 'Clever Hans' illustrates particularly well how it is possible to work out how a person is making sophisticated judgements by determining the conditions under which

they fail to make those judgements. Clever Hans could do basic arithmetic problems, and toured Germany at the turn of the 20th century showcasing this talent. The reason Clever Hans's abilities caused a sensation was that he was not a human being, but a horse. His trainers would read him arithmetic problems, such as 'fifteen divided by three', and Clever Hans would tap the correct number of times (five in this case, although we hope you were not wondering).

Clever Hans attracted the attention of many sceptics who wanted to work out how he was doing it. One of the first possibilities to be eliminated was that his handlers were somehow cheating by secretly communicating to Hans when he should stop. It was determined that Hans appeared to be able to do these sums even when his handlers were not around. Various other possibilities were eliminated one by one until the answer was found. If everyone around Hans was hidden from his view behind a screen, Hans lost his apparent mathematical powers. It was clear that Clever Hans was sensitive to the subtle shifts in body language that people unconsciously displayed as he approached the correct answer. When he was no longer able to read people's body language as he hit the correct number, he was no longer able to identify that number as correct.

What made Hans clever, then, was not his ability to understand spoken German, or do arithmetic, but his acute sensitivity to body language. Only by creating a situation in which Hans failed could people find out why he was normally so successful (Pfungst, 1911). Later in this chapter (see Ethics and Research Methods box), in a discussion of some weird and wonderful findings suggesting that young people can be unconsciously primed to act like old people, we will see that the Clever Hans story is all too relevant to contemporary social psychology. It is relevant because experiments may confirm even false hypotheses if participants can, like Hans, 'read' the body language of experimenters who know the hypothesis of the experiment, and display the behaviour they realize is expected of them (Doyen, Klein, Pichon & Cleeremans, 2012; see also Gilder & Heerey, 2018, covered in Chapter 5).

Social cognition – the study of the cognitive underpinnings of social thought and social behaviour – has, to a large extent, been about understanding how people's social skills and everyday powers of reasoning normally work, by creating or studying situations in which they do not work. The approach is a type of 'reverse engineering' – if you want to work out how a system works, you need to break it down into components and find out when it does not work (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009). It has been dominated, therefore, by studies of the mistakes people make – often borrowing tricks and techniques from cognitive psychology (Anderson, 2017). It is important that we do not make the logical mistake of inferring from this wealth of studies that people are fundamentally bad at social cognition. This wouldn't make any sense from an evolutionary or commonsense point of view: understanding just how the minds of humans (and other animlas) have developed advanced social capabilities is a profound problem in evolutionary psychology and behavioural biology (de Waal, 2016; Frith & Frith, 2012). Further, even studies of social cognition that have been designed to 'catch out' normal, healthy adult human beings also suggest that, in general, people's social judgements are accurate and rational (Jussim, 2012).

Social cognition
The study of the cognitive underpinnings of social thought and social behaviour.

In any case, by understanding when and why people make mistakes, social psychologists can understand why they are so clever. This is the yin and yang of social cognition, and of social psychology more generally – people are capable of such brilliance, and yet such stupidity. Since our understanding of our social environment is such an important determinant of our wellbeing, productivity and relationships with people and groups, social cognition is a prominent topic in social psychology, dominant throughout the 1980s and still active and vibrant now (Fiske & Taylor, 2016; Greifeneder, Bless & Fiedler, 2017).

In the first half of this chapter, we introduce you to people's capacities and limitations, in the context of two of the classic questions about social cognition. We consider how people explain

the events in their lives (causal attribution), and how they form impressions of other people (person perception). We look at some other errors and biases in social cognition. We then turn to research and theory on the fundamental nature of social cognition. How important are conscious and automatic processes? To what degree can we separate our minds from our bodies? How 'social' is social cognition?

CAUSAL ATTRIBUTIONS

Whenever you confront a problem in your life such as your car breaking down, it is important that you understand the cause of the problem. For example, if your car's battery is flat, it is not going to help you to invest in a new transmission. Dealing successfully with the breakdown and getting your car on the road will depend on you making the correct **causal attribution** – assigning the correct cause to the event. In this case, to proceed successfully, you must attribute the car's breakdown to its flat battery. Likewise, it is important to understand the causes of our own and other people's behaviours, so that we can repeat or emulate them (or not) in the future. Causal attributions have tremendous social importance. Whenever we assign blame or credit, and so determine who should be punished and who should be rewarded, we are engaging in causal attribution. Causal attributions also contribute to our feelings about ourselves and other people. For example, if we blame ourselves for disappointing outcomes and attribute our successes to luck, our self-esteem will probably be lower than if we take credit for successes and blame our failures on adverse circumstances (Weiner, 1985, 2018; see also Chapter 2 for a discussion of self-esteem). Causal attributions are also powerful bases for predicting and controlling events and behaviours (Forsterling & Rudolph, 1988). If we know what causes something, we may be more likely to allow or prevent it happening in future.

Causal attribution
The process of assigning a cause to an event or behaviour.

For these reasons, the study of causal attributions has been central to social psychology (Malle, 2011; Stiensmeier-Pelster & Heckhausen, 2018; Weiner, 2018). Throughout this book, you will see how important attributions are to our lives. Some of the founders of social psychology, such as Lewin (1936) and Heider (1958a), wrote extensively about the perception of cause and effect. For these theorists, and especially Heider (1958a), people engage in causal attribution not only to guide their behaviour (e.g., fixing the car), but also to make sense of the stream of events that make up their everyday lives.

Early theorists such as Lewin (1936) and Heider (1958a) were influenced by the German movement of **Gestalt psychology**, which suggests that people seek to tie together apparently diverse sensory data into meaningful wholes or 'Gestalts' (see Chapter 1). To relate diverse events into a simpler, more holistic understanding, people seek to explain the events they can observe in terms of underlying causes they may not be able to see directly. For Heider (1958a), a person's intentions are an example of such an underlying cause that can explain diverse behaviours. Imagine that someone gets their credit card out and spends some time on a computer; some weeks later they take their cat to a stranger's house and leave it there, buy sun cream and insect repellent at a local shop, pack these with clothes and a tourist guide to Turkey into a case, and get on the telephone to order a taxi to the airport. Although these behaviours have little or nothing in common from a purely physical point of view, we can effortlessly infer they intend to travel to Turkey. This inference allows us to explain all their behaviours and tie them into a single Gestalt.

Gestalt psychology
Approach proposing that objects are viewed in a holistic sense. Relevant to attributions, people attempt to understand events or behaviours as a whole by understanding their underlying causes.

Such is the explanatory power of intentions that we are prone to overrelying on them as explanations. This tendency was powerfully demonstrated in classic experiments by Heider and Simmel (1944). They presented participants with a film animation in which simple geometric shapes moved around on the screen. When participants were asked to account for what they

observed, they typically fabricated elaborate stories that granted intentionality to the shapes. For example, the circle and small triangle were supposed to be in love and the large triangle was said to have been thwarted in an attempt to steal the circle from its lover. Similarly, Michotte (1962) found that participants would describe the behaviour of two balls on a screen in intentional terms, such as: 'The big ball is chasing the little ball, but the little ball wants to get away.' Intentionality is a powerful explanatory principle that people prefer even when other types of explanations are more objectively appropriate.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Search online for animated demonstrations of the stimuli used by Heider and Simmel's (1944) experiment, and also those by Michotte (1962). Try, for example, the combination 'Heider Simmel demonstration' and 'Michotte demonstration'. You can see these animations for yourself and even try them on friends or relatives. How do they explain the behaviour of the objects on the screen? Note that Heider and Simmel's video is used in social psychological experiments to this day (for a review, see Lück, 2006). Scheele et al. (2015) found that people are more likely to see the shapes as intentional when they were administered a dose of the pheromone oxytocin. We ourselves (Douglas, Sutton, Callan, Dawtry & Harvey, 2016) found that the more strongly participants saw the shapes' behaviour as intentional, the more they tended to believe in conspiracy theories (e.g., that Princess Diana was murdered, or the moon landings were faked). If you want to create your own version of the Heider and Simmel video for a study of your own, try the app designed by Gordon and Roemmele (2014), at https://hsit.ict.usc.edu/ (it works best on a tablet where you can move multiple aspects of the shapes at once, and it's probably a good idea to do it with a friend).

THE NAIVE SCIENTIST APPROACH

By arguing that people seek to explain apparently diverse behaviour in terms of simpler, underlying causes, Heider (1958a) suggested that they are much like scientists. They construct meaning by devising causal theories of events and human behaviour, and these theories resemble scientific theories. As such, people are **naive** (lay, or intuitive) **scientists** who seek **parsimonious** explanations for complex social puzzles. Achieving simplicity and unity of understanding is one of the most fundamental goals of science, and is for laypeople too (Chater & Vitányi, 2003; Thagard, 1989; but for a critical discussion, see Kruglanski et al., 2018; Simon & Read, 2018). Indeed, all the theories you will discover in this book are scientific attempts to account for the complex phenomena of human beings' social lives in terms of relatively simple, underlying causes.

Naive scientist Heider (1958a) argued that ordinary people are scientific, rational thinkers who make causal attributions using similar processes to those of scientists.

Parsimony Also known as simplicity (but see Simon, 2009), this is the extent to which an explanation offers the simplest possible explanation of observations. Simpler explanations are preferred in science, because as explanations contain more parts, the chances that one part is false increase (see also the conjunction fallacy, which we discuss later in this chapter).

Heider argued that people often attribute causality to situations (e.g., social pressure, social context) and make external attributions for people's behaviours. At other times, they construct explanations that attribute cause to personal factors (e.g., personality) and make internal attributions. But because people seek causal explanations in order to be able to predict and control their social world, they tend to look more towards stable properties of the social world, and therefore prefer internal attributions such as explanations related to personality and ability. For example, if a person is rude to you, you are more likely to attribute their behaviour to something about them (e.g., they are rude), rather than to something about the situation (e.g., they had a bad day). That said, some features of the world are also stable, or at least predictable, including their influence on our behaviour: for example, we are more likely to be rude and aggressive on hot days (see Chapter 13). So how, exactly, do people process information to decide between various possible explanations of behaviour?

Covariation model Kelley's (1967) model of causal attribution, which argues that people typically attribute the cause of behaviour to a factor that covaries most clearly with the behaviour.

Covariation principle The attribution of events to conditions that tend to be present when the event happens, and absent when the event does not happen.

This question was addressed by the **covariation model**, the most influential and well-known model of causal attribution, put forward by Kelley (1967). Kelley argued that ordinary people are effectively naive scientists, who make causal attributions in much the same way as professional scientists do. For Kelley (1967), the **covariation principle** lies at the heart of the causal attribution process for both professional and naive scientists and forms the basis of the covariation model. According to the covariation principle, we attribute events to conditions that tend to be present when the event happens, and absent when the event does not happen. For example, we might attribute a headache to stress because we know we are more likely to get headaches when we are stressed than when we are not stressed. Similarly, we are more likely to attribute an argument between two housemates to the first housemate, if we have noticed that there tend to be more arguments when they are around. In doing this, we are behaving much as professional scientists would do. As we saw in Chapter 1, we can infer that an independent variable (e.g., caffeine) causes irritability if those who we have given coffee to are more likely to display irritable behaviour than those who have drunk a decaffeinated, 'placebo' coffee.

Kelley (1967) turned the covariation principle into a model of causal attribution made in social situations. The typical social situation has three key components: a *person* who displays a particular behaviour, an object or *stimulus* towards which the behaviour is directed, and it occurs at a particular time or *occasion*. For example, consider the situation: 'Hannah swore at her sister on Friday.' Something about any of these three components, the person (Hannah), the stimulus (her sister) and the occasion (that particular Friday) might explain the effect (swearing). Applying the covariation principle, an observer can infer the most appropriate causal explanation by drawing on three dimensions of information about covariation:

Consensus Information about the extent to which other people react in the same way to a particular stimulus.

Distinctiveness Information about the extent to which a person reacts in a particular way to a particular stimulus or reacts the same way to many other stimuli.

Consistency Information about the extent to which a person reacts in the same way to a stimulus on many other occasions.

1. **Consensus** information: refers to whether Hannah is more prone than other people to swearing at her sister. Consensus is low when she is, and high when other people swear at her sister just as often as he does.
2. **Distinctiveness** information: refers to whether Hannah swears at her sister more often than she swears at other people. Distinctiveness is high when she does, and low when she does not.
3. **Consistency**: refers to whether Hannah swore at her sister only on this Friday, or whether she has done so on other occasions. Consistency is low if Friday was the first time, and high if it happens every day.

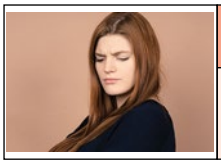
Armed with this information, people can make appropriate causal attributions. If consensus is low, but distinctiveness is low and consistency is high, then Hannah is the only one of the three possible causes that covaries with swearing (Hannah habitually swears at her sister, and at other people, more than others do). Thus, it is appropriate to attribute the swearing to Hannah. Conversely, if distinctiveness is high, consensus high and consistency also high, then Hannah's sister is the factor that tends to be around when swearing happens, and absent when it does not (Hannah only really swears at her sister). It would appear that Hannah has a bad sister. Finally, if consistency is low, consensus high and distinctiveness low, then it would seem that there was something about that Friday that caused Hannah to swear at her sister. Perhaps it was a hot and difficult day. Kelley's model is often known as the ANOVA model because the procedure is similar to the statistical technique of analysis of variance that is employed in much psychological research. People make attributions for events (and predictions of future events) based on a careful weighing up of the information they have and how it all pieces together. The terminology may seem complex, but the ideas are elegant and simple. We use the example of Hannah and her sister to illustrate Kelley's model further in Figure 3.1.

Covariation information that implicates **Hannah**

Consensus is low: Only **Hannah** swears at her sister		Distinctiveness is low: **Hannah** swears at other people		Consistency is high: **Hannah** often swears at her sister	
Hannah	Other people	Hannah's sister	Other people	This Friday	Other days
&@%*!		&@%*!	&@%*!	&@%*!	&@%*!

iStock.com/Deagreez

Covariation information that implicates **Hannah's sister**



Consensus is high: Other people swear at Hannah's sister		Distinctiveness is high: Hannah only swears at **her sister**		Consistency is high: Hannah often swears at her sister	
Hannah	Other people	Hannah's sister	Other people	This Friday	Other days
&@%*!	&@%*!	&@%*!		&@%*!	&@%*!

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Covariation information that implicates the **occasion**

Consensus is high: Other people swear at Hannah's sister		Distinctiveness is low: Hannah swears at other people		Consistency is low: Hannah only swore at her sister **this Friday**	
Hannah	Other people	Hannah's sister	Other people	This Friday	Other days
&@%*!	&@%*!	&@%*!	&@%*!	&@%*!	

FIGURE 3.1 Kelley's (1967) covariation model of social attribution Is Hannah prone to swearing in general, or did she have a bad day? Or is her sister just no good? The answer suggested by Kelley's theory (Hannah, her sister, or the occasion) is in bold text.

Extending Kelley's naive scientist approach

Many studies have essentially supported Kelley's (1967) model of causal attribution (e.g., Forsterling, 1989; McArthur, 1972; Orvis, Cunningham & Kelley, 1975; Ployhart, Ehrhart & Hayes, 2005; Pruitt & Insko, 1980; Sutton & McClure, 2001). People generally make the causal attributions that Kelley predicted when presented with combinations of consensus, distinctiveness and consistency information. More generally, studies have shown that, everything being equal, people generally adhere to the covariation principle, attributing events to covarying causes – those that are present when similar events happen and absent when they do not happen. Where modifications and complementary models have been put forward, they have been largely in keeping with the idea that people approach causal attribution in ways that mirror scientific theories and explanations, but acknowledge that other factors come into play, such as the demands of conversation (Maris & Hoorens, 2014) and the desire to pin the blame for negative events on a wrongdoer (Hilton, McClure & Sutton, 2010; McClure, Hilton & Sutton, 2007). For an informative review of the naive scientist metaphor and others that have followed, see Alicke, Mandel, Hilton, Gerstenberg and Lagnado (2015). Three key extensions of the naive scientist model are worth exploring here.

Improved analysis of covariation between events, persons, stimuli and occasions

Early tests of Kelley's (1967) model of causal attribution generally supported it, but appeared to reveal a systematic mistake in the way that people used covariation information. People appeared to overattribute events to the person (McArthur, 1972). Thus, even when consensus information was high, suggesting (in our example) that everyone swears at Hannah's sister, people would often indicate that something about Hannah was the cause of her swearing. This finding appeared to be consistent with the correspondence bias (also known as the fundamental attribution error), which we will review shortly, wherein people appear to infer from a person's behaviour that they must have a corresponding disposition, such as a short temper. However, it turns out that Kelley (1967; also McArthur, 1972) had made a subtle but important mistake in

how he operationalized the covariation principle (e.g., Cheng & Novick, 1990; Forsterling, 1989; Schuster, Ruble & Weinert, 1998). If you want to know whether Hannah covaries with swearing, you need to know whether she swears more than other people in general – not just whether she swears at her sister more. But this information is missing (Figure 3.1). Similarly, distinctiveness information, as Kelley formulated it, doesn't tell you whether Hannah's sister is sworn at with more-than-usual frequency by people other than Hannah. Consistency information doesn't tell you about how other people behaved on the occasion, nor how Hannah behaved in relation to other people. More recent studies have shown that when participants are provided with complete information, they follow the covariation principle without systematic errors (e.g., Cheng & Novick, 1990; Forsterling, 1989).

Beyond the covariation principle

In Chapter 1, we discussed an important truism – that correlation, by itself, does not entail causation. Just because two factors, A and B, are correlated (i.e., they covary) does not mean that one causes the other. A problem for Kelley's (1967) covariation principle is that it assumes that people will be content with covariation information alone. In order to be convinced that there is a causal relationship between A and B, scientists, at a minimum, want to understand that other possible causes have been controlled for. More recent research has shown that the same is true of ordinary, non-scientific folk. They are more likely to make a causal attribution to a factor such as Hannah when they know there are no 'third causes' that might be responsible for her covariation with swearing. Only under these circumstances will they grant 'causal power' to Hannah (Cheng, 1997). They also want to know that the supposed cause happens reliably before the supposed effect, presumably informed by a mental model that suggests causality cannot work backwards in time (McCormack, Frosch, Patrick & Lagnado, 2015).

Causal mechanism
The mechanism, or explanation, for one variable causing another.

In order to be convinced that A is causing B, at least in the absence of robust evidence from controlled experiments, scientists also want to know that there is some plausible explanation of *how* A causes B. This is known as a **causal mechanism**. Ahn, Kalish, Medin and Gelman (1995) showed that causal mechanisms are important for laypeople too. In their studies, they asked participants to explain events such as a car accident. Even when they knew that the driver had a previously impeccable driving record – the driver did not covary with accidents – they attributed the accident to them if they knew they had been drinking, or were short-sighted and were not wearing their glasses at the time of the accident. Participants did this even when they knew that the other driver involved in the accident had been involved in several crashes before. In these cases, armed with causal mechanism information about how the driver in question might have caused the accident, participants attached less weight to covariation information (see also Yeung & Griffiths, 2015; White, 1995).

Beyond persons, stimuli and occasions

Another problem for Kelley's (1967) original model is that it is not very specific about the causal attributions that people make. Although assigning blame and credit are important, we are not usually satisfied with causal attributions such as: 'Something about Hannah caused her to swear at her sister.' They seem more like preliminary attributions made early in a process of enquiry, and leave open the obvious question: 'Well, *what* about Hannah caused her to swear?' Is she just prone to swearing for a laugh or is she aggressive, for example? This problem is compounded by the fact that it is sometimes difficult to pin down whether a given attribution is really about the person. If we are to say, 'Hannah swore at her sister because she had a bad upbringing', is this really something about Hannah? Or is it about something external to Hannah – the way she was treated as a child? It is difficult to pin down some specific causal attributions and categorize them according to Kelley's (1967) scheme of person, stimulus and occasion (White, 1991).

In light of these problems, researchers have examined what kinds of more specific attributions people make, and how they make them. In doing so, they have returned to Heider's (1958a)

insight that perceived intentions are central to explanations of people's behaviour. Malle, Knobe and Nelson (2007) have shown that people have a sophisticated theoretical understanding of intentional behaviour that, once again, resembles some of the concepts scientific psychologists would use. They explain behaviours in terms of mental states such as people's intentions, beliefs, desires and moods (Korman & Malle, 2016), and 'causal history' factors that lead to the formation of those states. Our attributions, in sum, are intensely psychological (Böhm & Pfister, 2015).

TWO FAMOUS 'ERRORS' IN ATTRIBUTION

Thus far we have examined the cleverness, accuracy and sophistication of the causal attributions that ordinary people can make, even though they typically lack formal training in logic or statistics. It is for good reason that social psychologists have bestowed such people with the tag 'naive scientist', even if the naive part seems to be patronizing. Indeed, recent research suggests that, in some respects, the social cognition done by ordinary people has been more accurate and sophisticated than social psychologists have given it credit for. Nevertheless, many researchers and textbook writers have alleged that laypeople are prone to two key mistakes when they make causal attributions. These are the **correspondence bias**, or **fundamental attribution error**, and the **actor-observer bias**. These so-called 'errors' are related, and we will review each one in turn.

Correspondence bias/fundamental attribution error People's tendency to overattribute causes to a person and infer that if a person behaves in a particular way, it must be because of some underlying trait.

Actor-observer bias The tendency for actors to attribute their own behaviours to the situation, and for observers to explain behaviours in terms of personality traits.

Jones and Davis (1965) developed **correspondent inference theory** to explain why and how people make attributions. This theory suggests that three factors influence the extent to which people make dispositional or situational attributions for a person's behaviour:

1. They think about the extent to which the person had the choice to engage in the action.
2. They ask whether the behaviour is expected, based on the situation or social role of the actor.
3. They consider the intended consequences of the actor's behaviour.

According to this theory, people are most able to make dispositional attributions for a person's behaviour when the behaviour has been freely chosen, is not a function of the situation or expected roles, and is clearly intentional (see Figure 3.2).

Correspondent inference theory Theory arguing that people attempt to infer whether a person's action is caused by internal dispositions, and they do so by looking at factors related to the action.

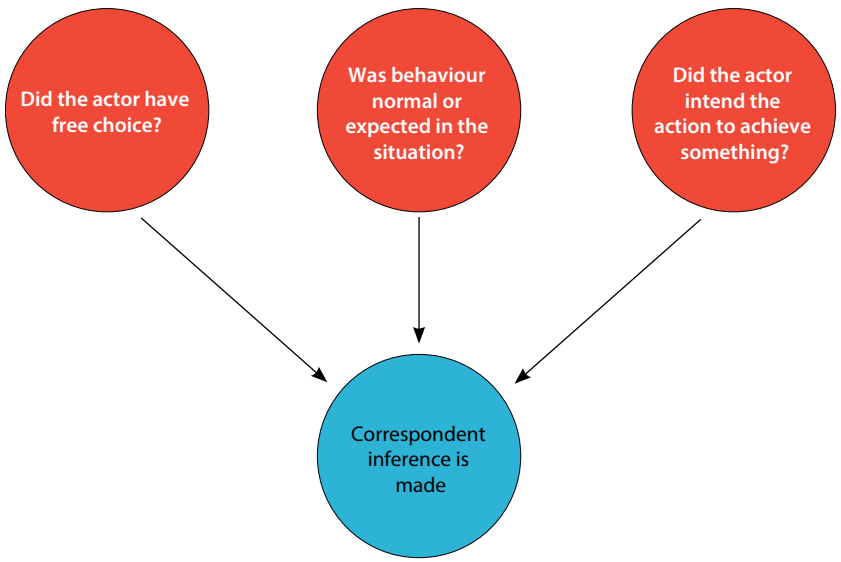
Did the actor have free choice?
Was behaviour normal or expected in the situation?
Did the actor intend the action to achieve something?
Correspondent inference is made

FIGURE 3.2 Correspondent inference theory People are more likely to infer that a person has traits that correspond to their behaviour (e.g., they're opinionated because they started an argument) when these three conditions are met. Subsequent research on correspondence bias (covered later in this chapter) suggests that people often do not pay much attention to whether the actor had a choice, or whether the behaviour was normal in the situation.

In fact, research findings soon indicated that people do not closely follow the ideal or rational steps outlined in Jones and Davis's (1965) theory. Rather they appeared to fall prone to *correspondence bias* or the *fundamental attribution error*, which, as we mentioned earlier, is the tendency to attribute behaviour to stable underlying traits or dispositions of a person. This seems to happen even when there is insufficient evidence to support such an attribution, and even when there is evidence that something about the situation is likely to have caused the behaviour (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Jones, 1979).

The fundamental attribution error was first demonstrated in a classic study by Jones and Harris (1967). In the Cold War environment of the 1960s, they presented university students with essays, apparently written by other students at their own university, which expressed either positive or negative views towards Fidel Castro, the Communist leader of Cuba and bête noire of American politics. They were later asked to indicate the extent to which the writers were pro- or anti-Castro. Crucially, before they made this judgement, participants were told that either their fellow essay-writing students had expressed these opinions freely, or they had been told what to write (and so, presumably, were merely expressing the opinions they had been told to express). Of course, and quite appropriately, participants inferred that authors who had freely chosen to write pro-Castro essays must really be more pro-Castro than authors who had chosen to write an anti-Castro essay. However, quite remarkably, participants also made similar inferences even when they were told that writers were instructed to write a pro- or anti-Castro essay. Thus, even when they knew the essay writers were influenced by a strong situational factor – being told what kind of essay to write – observers still inferred that the essays reflected the writers' underlying beliefs (see Figure 3.3).

Later findings suggested that this attribution bias is dependent on too many factors to be truly described as 'fundamental'. For example, it is stronger in Western cultures, where the individual is seen as paramount and people tend not to think holistically about all the elements in a situation that might have caused the behaviour (Miyamoto & Kitayama, 2018; Nisbett, Peng, Choi & Norenzayan, 2001). Further, the fundamental attribution error depends on age. In the West, young children explain behaviour in terms of specific factors within the situation (e.g., 'he cried because it was hot') and only later begin to show a tendency to favour personality attributions (e.g., 'he cried because he is a crybaby') (see White, 1988). In other cultures, children do not necessarily move towards the fundamental attribution error as they develop (e.g., Miller, 1984). These findings suggest that Western children are learning to conform to a culture-specific style of attributions. Further, even Westerners prefer to explain behaviour in terms of temporary mental states, rather than traits, when explaining unusual or unexpected behaviour (Korman & Malle, 2016). Also, for reasons we shall explore in more depth later in this chapter, the so-called 'fundamental attribution error' occurs principally when people are distracted, or otherwise lack the cognitive resources to properly think through their attributions (Gilbert, 2002).

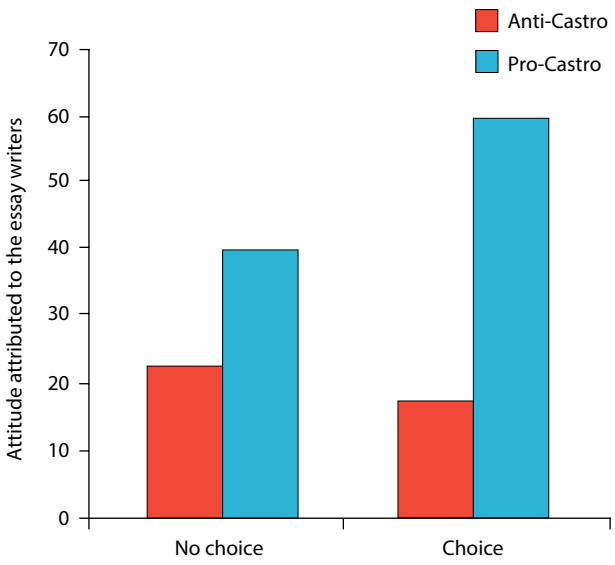

FIGURE 3.3 Demonstration of correspondence bias
Participants who freely chose to write a pro- or anti-Castro essay were attributed with pro- or anti-Castro attitudes respectively. Unexpectedly, the same pattern emerged even when the essay writers had no choice. This demonstrates the correspondence bias – the tendency for people to attribute behaviours to underlying dispositions.

Source: Data from Jones and Harris (1967)

If we can say that the so-called 'fundamental attribution error' is not 'fundamental', what can we say about

whether it is an 'error'? As we saw in our coverage of Kelley's (1967) model of attribution, sometimes the mistakes that participants seem to be making are really quite rational responses to mistakes and oversights made by social psychologists. Were Jones and Harris's (1967) participants really wrong to say that people who wrote pro-Castro essays were somewhat pro-Castro? Here's a **thought experiment** that might help. Imagine that Jones and Harris (1967) had told participants to shoot their fellow students. If you were asked to explain the behaviour of a participant who complied with this instruction, would you be happy merely to say that 'someone told them to do it', or would you think that their compliance with this instruction says something about the kind of person they are? Obedience to such instructions is surely unthinkable for most people, violating as it does some of our most deeply felt moral convictions (but see Chapter 9, where we outline Milgram's obedience studies).

Thought experiment
The process of thinking about a principle and its consequences, typically in an imaginary situation, in order to develop or critically evaluate theories (for reviews and examples, see J.R. Brown, 2011; Tittle, 2016).

Returning to the Jones and Harris (1967) study, participants may have believed that truly anti-Castro students would refuse to go along with the instruction to write an essay in praise of him. The fact that essay writers obeyed the instruction suggests that they cannot have been *very* anti-Castro. Indeed, when Morris and Larrick (1995) took these kinds of beliefs into account, the fundamental attribution error disappeared. Participants who thought the instruction would be enough to make anybody write such an essay, regardless of the writer's opinions, did not attribute the essay to the writer's attitudes. As brilliant and elegant as their study was, Jones and Harris had simply not counted on the fact that their participants may not see the instruction as enough to produce the behaviour. More recent research suggests that when people have sufficient time, concentration, information and motivation, they do not irrationally overlook situational causes of behaviour and zero in on personality characteristics (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; McClure, 1998). For this reason, the tendency to infer that people have traits that correspond to their behaviour is now called the *correspondence bias* rather than the fundamental attribution error (e.g., Genschow, Rigoni & Brass, 2017; Hopthrow, Hooper, Mahmood, Meier & Weger, 2017; Maxfield, Pyszczynski, Greenberg & Bultmann, 2017). We shall return to this bias later in this chapter.

The second so-called 'bias' that warrants closer investigation is the *actor-observer bias*, which has been found in several studies and widely claimed to be a robust and established finding (Malle, 2006). The actor-observer bias can be described as follows. As actors explaining our own behaviour, we tend to cite the situational factors that led us to act. As observers, we tend to explain the behaviour of other people in terms of personality factors. There have been two main theoretical explanations for the effect. One is perceptual – as an actor, you generally gaze from your perspective at the stimuli affecting your behaviour and you do not look at yourself. As an observer, on the other hand, you generally watch the person at least as much, and usually more, than the other factors in the situation (Malle & Pearce, 2001). Thus, as an actor, the attributions that come most easily to mind are the features of the situation you are looking at, whereas as an observer, the attributions that spring to mind are those concerned with the person who is the focus of your attention (Jones & Nisbett, 1971; Malle & Knobe, 1997).

Storms (1973) found support for this explanation in a series of studies in which participants were asked to have a conversation with another person while the conversation was being videoed. Some students watched the conversation from their own perspective (that is, they watched the other person and their behaviour), and some watched the conversation from the other student's perspective (that is, they watched their own behaviour). Participants were then asked how much they attributed their own behaviour and the other student's behaviour to situational (versus dispositional) factors. Of course, seeing yourself on video reverses your perspective, so that suddenly you look at yourself as an observer would do. Thus, we would expect the actor-observer effect to be reversed in conditions where their perspective was switched by the use of video technology. Indeed, this is what happened. Observers watching the scene unfold from the actor's perspective were less likely to make personality attributions than actors watching

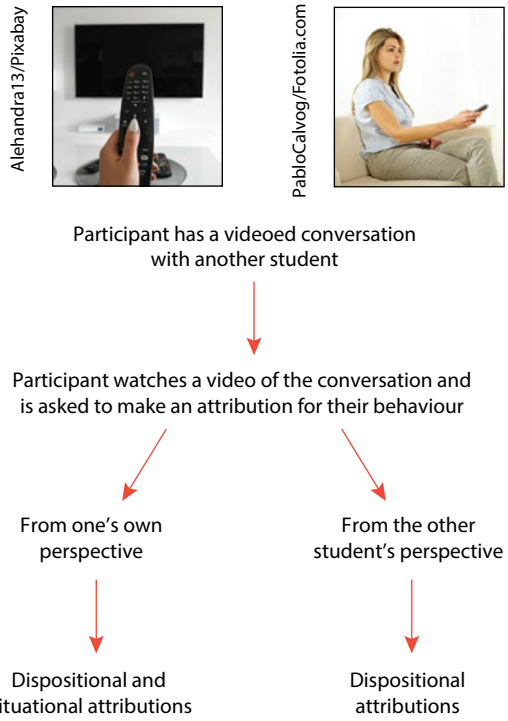
Alehandra13/Pixabay
PabloCalvog/Fotolia.com
Participant has a videoed conversation with another student
Participant watches a video of the conversation and is asked to make an attribution for their behaviour
From one's own perspective
From the other student's perspective
Dispositional and situational attributions
Dispositional attributions

FIGURE 3.4 The actor-observer effect Storms (1973) demonstrated that when participants watch themselves from another person's perspective, they are more likely to make a dispositional inference, thus reversing the actor-observer effect.

the scene from the observer's perspective (see Figure 3.4). A later study by Arkin and Duval (1975) suggested that actors do not necessarily have to watch the video in order to change the way they explain their own behaviour. The mere presence of video cameras caused them to explain their own behaviour in personality terms, apparently because they elicited the state of private self-awareness (see Chapter 2).

Although the actor-observer effect was observed in several early studies, contradictory findings soon emerged. In a meta-analysis of the results of 173 studies, Malle (2006) found that, on average, there was little or no actor-observer effect. Under some conditions, however, the actor-observer effect is significant. For example, when explaining *negative* behaviour such as cheating or mistakes, people invoke the situation for themselves and personality characteristics for others. But when explaining their own *positive* behaviour, people refer to internal causes, and when explaining others' positive behaviour, people refer to external causes. Clearly, people are motivated to take credit and deflect blame (another meta-analysis by Mezulis, Abramson, Hyde and Hankin, 2004, also showed that this self-serving bias exists across cultures). It is this, rather than some fundamental shift in perspective, that leads people to explain their own and others' behaviour differently. Even when Malle (2006) considered all six studies that had examined the effect of perspective taking (through video cameras), he found that although reversing participants' perspective produced a pattern opposite to the actor-observer bias, the bias itself was not significant, on average, across the control conditions in which actors and observers viewed the scene from their normal perspectives.

This is not to say that actors and observers make exactly the same attributions for behaviour. Recent research shows, for example, that guided by their understanding of intentional behaviour, actors are more likely than observers to describe their behaviour in terms of *reasons* – the desires and beliefs that motivated them. This is partly because actors have some degree of inside knowledge – more than observers, they know what thoughts were going through their minds before they acted (Malle, Knobe & Nelson 2007). A recent study shows that people make mistakes about others' political preferences. In a US study, people who voted for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election tended to think that people who voted for Donald Trump were attracted by his more extreme policy positions – which in fact had relatively little influence on Trump voters (Barasz, Kim & Evangelidis, 2019). In sum, there are actor-observer differences in explanations of behaviour – but they do not boil down to the simple distinction between internal and external causes.

Motivated tactician Social cognitive approach that characterizes people as having various cognitive strategies to choose from – they choose on the basis of personal motives, needs and goals.

Cognitive shortcuts (heuristics) Because they are cognitive misers, people take shortcuts that provide mostly accurate information most of the time.

Cognitive miser Social cognitive approach which argues that people will take the least cognitively demanding approach to attributions and social judgements.

Other biases and errors

Attention to the motives underlying attributions and the errors that people sometimes make has shifted researchers' perspective away from the naive scientist model advocated by Heider and Kelley, and more towards a conceptualization of people as **motivated tacticians**, where attributions and judgements are said to be determined by personal motives. In particular, people are motivated to take the least cognitively demanding approach to the attributions they make, so that they tend to use **cognitive shortcuts** (or **heuristics**) to make attributions (Taylor, 1981, 1998), and can therefore be characterized as **cognitive misers** (Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Taylor, 1981).

Sometimes, the choice of shortcut is influenced by personal motivations, and as we saw in Chapter 2, one of the primary motivations we have as human beings is to view the self positively – the so-called 'self-enhancement motive'.

As a consequence of this self-enhancement motive, people are prone to errors when they judge themselves and others. In particular, people seek new, positive information about the self and they also seek ways to alter existing negative views of the self. In Chapter 2, we discussed the phenomenon of *behavioural self-handicapping*, where people compensate for their failure at a task by sometimes acting in ways that sabotage their own chance of success (Berglas & Jones, 1978; Rhodewalt, Morf, Hazlett & Fairfield, 1991). Another example of attribution bias related to the motive of self-enhancement is the **self-serving attribution bias** (Arkin, Cooper & Kolditz, 1980; Zuckerman, 1979). People attribute the causes of negative events to aspects that deflect blame from the self (e.g., having a car accident because a tree 'came out of nowhere'), or positive events that attribute success to the self (Stewart, 2005).

Yet another example are more general **self-serving beliefs** that lead to **self-serving biases**. As we saw in Chapter 2, people generally see themselves as 'better than average' in a wide variety of different ways, and less likely to experience negative outcomes. For example, people view themselves as less likely (10 per cent) than others (50 per cent) to be hurt in a terrorist attack (Lerner, Gonzalez, Small & Fischhoff, 2003). This **unrealistic optimism** can also cloud people's attributions for their own and others' behaviours. In particular, people tend to take credit for their successes (internal attribution) and deflect their failures (external attribution) in order to enhance and protect the self respectively. The self-serving attribution bias becomes less pronounced as children develop (e.g., van Elk, Rutjens & van der Pligt, 2015). However, although weaker in adulthood, it by no means disappears, and it appears to get stronger again later in life (Mezulis et al., 2004). Also, the tendency to commit these attributional biases seems to be consistent across many different cultures (Fletcher & Ward, 1988); compared to Westerners, those living in more collectivist and holistic Asian cultures show the bias less strongly, but show it nonetheless (Mezulis et al., 2004). In addition to motivational factors, situational and cognitive factors are also associated with this bias. For example, Lammers and Burgmer (in press) found that people are more prone to the self-serving bias (in this case, for the successes and failures of a group of people of which they were part) when they chronically feel powerful, or are experimentally made to feel powerful. Feeling powerful also makes people feel like they are in a metaphorical 'spotlight' (the centre of attention) and can exaggerate positive self-perceptions. Miller and Ross (1975) argued that people generally accept responsibility for their success because they expect to succeed. If they work hard to succeed, they may overinflate the correlation between their effort and their success, so they feel that they controlled their success more than they actually did (see also van Elk et al., 2015).

Yet another bias related to self-enhancement is the **false consensus effect**. This is the tendency for people to view their own behaviours, attitudes and opinions as more typical (that is, shared by others) than they really are (Ross, Greene & House, 1977). For example, Ross et al. (1977) asked students on an American university campus to wear a sandwich board saying 'Eat at Joe's' for half an hour. Exactly half the participants agreed to do this. They were then asked what percentage of students had agreed to wear the sign. Those who had agreed to wear the sign estimated that the majority of students (68 per cent) would also agree and those who had refused to wear the sign also believed that the majority would have done as they did (77 per cent). This is a robust effect, and is self-enhancing because it allows people to justify negative events in their lives. If they feel that others would have behaved the same (e.g., performed poorly on a test of 'social sensitivity', as in Alicke and Largo, 1995), this illusion of consensus allows people to feel that their skills and abilities are normal. It also allows people to justify their quirky or unwarranted opinions to themselves. For example, people who think vaccines cause autism overestimate the proportion of the population who agree with them (Rabinowitz, Latella, Stern & Jost, 2016), as do people with radical (Mannarini, Roccato & Russo, 2015) and populist (Schulz, Wirth & Müller, in press) political positions.

Self-serving attribution bias Motivated by self-enhancement motives, this is the tendency for people to attribute events to causes that serve the self.

Self-serving beliefs The tendency for people to see themselves more positively (and experience more positive outcomes) than others.

Self-serving bias Making attributions that favour the self (e.g., blaming failures on external causes, and attributing success to internal causes).

Unrealistic optimism The tendency for people to see themselves as more likely than others to experience good things, and less likely than others to experience bad things.

False consensus effect The tendency for people to see their own behaviours, attitudes and opinions as more typical than they are.

False uniqueness effect The tendency for people to see themselves as more likely to perform positive behaviours than others.

In contrast, the **false uniqueness effect** is a self-enhancing bias in which people to see themselves as more likely to perform positive behaviours than others and to see themselves as less biased than others (Ehrlinger, Gilovich & Ross, 2005). This is said to occur in part because people underestimate the number of people who do positive things (e.g., giving to charity) and overestimate the number of people who do bad things such as stealing (Monin & Norton, 2003).

APPLICATIONS OF ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Although people are normally capable of making appropriate causal attributions so long as they have enough information, motivation and cognitive resources, the attribution process can go wrong. As Heider (1958a) observed, making incorrect attributions can lead to unhelpful decisions, with disastrous consequences for behaviour. It can also have profoundly negative consequences for mood. Research has shown that attributions can have these consequences in many aspects of people's lives. Below we illustrate some studies on topics to which attribution theory has been applied:

- Mental health: people with depression tend to have an 'attributional style' (Abramson, Metalsky & Alloy, 1989), in which they attribute negative events in their lives to internal, global and stable causes. For example, an attribution such as 'I failed the test because I'm stupid' is internal because the cause resides within you, global because being stupid is going to affect many areas of your life, and stable because if you are stupid now, there is a good chance you are always going to be stupid (whereas, say, being tired is a temporary condition that a good night's sleep will rectify). The dimensions of *internality, globality* and *stability* are consistent with Kelley's (1967) theory that attributions are made to the person (high internality), to the stimulus (low globality) or to the occasion (low stability). *Controllability* is another important dimension of attributions – people with depression and anxiety tend to attribute outcomes to events outside their control (e.g., physical attractiveness) rather than within their control (e.g., the way they dress). One of the cornerstones of modern approaches to psychotherapy, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy, is training people to stop explaining events in their lives in an overly pessimistic, self-defeating way (Beck, Rush, Shaw & Emery, 1979).
- Academic performance: though a pessimistic attribution style is linked to feeling bad, it is not necessarily linked to doing worse. A meta-analysis of studies by Richardson, Abraham, and Bond (2012) indicated that pessimistic attribution style had no relation to academic achievement in university students; a range of other factors, such as adopting a strategic approach to learning, being organized and believing that you can perform (self-efficacy) were more important. However, a study of over 5,000 high school students in New Zealand showed that students achieve higher marks when they take credit for their best marks and deflect blame for their worst marks (McClure et al., 2011). Further, a number of studies suggest that attributional retraining – a form of therapy in which people are encouraged to make more optimistic attributions (attributing outcomes to controllable causes, and successes to internal causes) – seems to yield positive effects on university students' achievement,

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anxiety and drop-out rate (e.g., Ruthig, Perry, Hall & Hladkyj, 2004). Taken together, these findings suggest that attributional training programmes may help students, not by changing the way they explain events per se, but by other means – for example, helping them understand how they can control outcomes. In another study (Haynes, Daniels, Stupnisky, Perry & Hladkyj, 2008), attributional retraining appeared to boost first-year university students' achievement by making them more motivated to learn (mastery motivation), rather than by making them more motivated to achieve high grades (performance motivation).

- Sport: Parker et al. (2018) conducted a randomized study in which university athletes either underwent attributional retraining or were assigned to a waitlist control (no treatment). Students who underwent attributional retraining subsequently obtained better grades in their studies, and this was mediated (explained) by an increased perception of control over their grades. Attributional retraining programmes are widely used by sports psychologists and are also employed to help older adults with physical mobility (Weinberg, Hall & Sverdlik, 2015).
- Aggression: aggressive people are prone to the *hostile attribution bias*, seeing innocent or ambiguous behaviours by other people (e.g., bumping into them) as deliberate acts of provocation (Orobio de Castro, Veerman, Koops, Bosch & Monshouwer, 2002; Pornari and Wood, 2010; for a review, see Martinelli, Ackermann, Bernhard, Freitag & Schwenck, 2018). Longitudinal studies have shown that if children at age five are predisposed to interpreting ambiguous behaviours in this way, they are more likely to be aggressive 12 years later (Lansford et al., 2006).
- Close relationships: people who attribute their spouse's negative behaviour to internal, stable and global factors (e.g., 'they are demanding') are subsequently less forgiving and less satisfied with their marriage (Fincham, Paleari and Regalia, 2002).
- Intergroup relations: Becker, Wagner and Christ (2011) asked a representative sample of German participants to explain the global financial crisis of 2008. Those who blamed the crisis on the actions of bankers and speculators subsequently showed increases in anti-Semitism, since Jewish people are stereotypically associated with global finance. Those who blamed the crisis on immigrants showed increases in ethnic prejudice. Those who were encouraged to blame the crisis on the global financial system did not show any increases in prejudice towards outgroups. Intergroup attributions tend to be characterized by ethno-centrism, that is, the expectation that our own groups tend to do positive things and other groups tend to do negative things, and therefore resemble the self-serving biases discussed earlier (Hewstone & Jaspers, 1982). More recently, Imhoff et al. (2017) found that Germans made more external attributions for the Nazi Holocaust in the Second World War, blaming factors such as 'the bad economic conditions and the high unemployment rate'. Unsurprisingly, Israelis and Poles did not make the same attributions. This type of bias is known as the **ultimate attribution error** (Arieli, Amit & Menster, 2018; Liberman, Howard, Vasquez & Woodward, 2018; Pettigrew, 1979).

Ultimate attribution error Tendency to attribute positive ingroup and negative outgroup behaviours to dispositions of the group, and positive outgroup and negative ingroups behaviours to situations (term introduced by Pettigrew, 1979).

PERSON PERCEPTION

Your safety, success and enjoyment in life depend not only on the attributions you make for your own and others' behaviours, but more generally on your ability to make accurate judgements about people. Who can you trust? Who is fun to be around? Who is needy or manipulative? Who will be able to help you with a task? People who struggle to make these judgements are more prone to a range of psychological disorders, including depression (Coyne, 1976; Lane & DePaulo, 1999; Russell, Stokes, Jones, Czogalik & Rohleder, 1993). How do we make these important judgements? This is the question at the heart of the study of **person perception** (also known as **impression formation**).

Person perception/ impression formation The study of how people make judgements about others, and the information used to make these judgements.

Configural model of person perception

Configural model of person perception
Asch's model of person perception, which argues that central traits play a greater role in determining the final impression.

Central traits
Traits that have greater influence on how people configure their impressions of others.

Peripheral traits
Traits that have lesser influence on how people configure their impressions of others.

Warmth
Perceptions of a person's (or group's) overall sociability and morality, as seen in judgements of specific traits such as friendliness or patience.

Early theoretical frameworks, like those in attribution theory, were influenced by Gestalt psychology and the notion that laypeople think like scientists. Asch's (1946) **configural model of person perception** suggested that we form a holistic impression of people that integrates a small number of important cues. Some cues, known as **central traits**, have a lot of influence over the impressions we form of people, whereas others, known as **peripheral traits**, have less influence.

To test this model, Asch (1946) asked participants to read a list of attributes about a fictitious person (e.g., energetic, assured, talkative, cold, ironical, inquisitive, persuasive). There were two lists that differed only slightly – specifically, the list given to one set of participants contained the word 'warm' and the list given to the remaining participants contained the word 'cold'. Participants were asked to rate the fictitious person on a list of bipolar dimensions such as happy/unhappy and reliable/unreliable. It was found that participants who were given the list containing the word 'warm' rated the person much more favourably than the participants who had the list containing the word 'cold'. From these results, Asch argued that being warm or cold is a central trait that has a strong influence on overall impression formation. He found that when the words 'warm' and 'cold' were replaced by 'polite' and 'blunt', the differences in the impressions formed was less striking.

Kelley (1950) tested the configural theory in a naturalistic setting. He introduced a visiting lecturer to several class groups – for half of the groups, the introduction included the trait 'cold' and for the other half, the introduction described the lecturer as 'warm'. The students were then later asked to evaluate the lecturer and, as predicted, student evaluations were more positive when the lecturer had been described as 'warm' rather than 'cold'. Interestingly, Kelley also observed that students were more likely to ask questions and interact with the lecturer who had been described as 'warm'.

Since the pioneering research of Asch (1946) and Kelley (1950), many more studies have supported the basic idea that **warmth** is a crucial trait in forming impressions of people – and also of groups of people. The research has also pushed beyond this basic finding. One

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line of research has shown that although of primary importance, warmth is not the only central trait in town: perceived **competence** is also fundamentally important to how we judge others.

Competence
Perceptions of a person's (or group's) overall ability to carry out their intentions, as seen in judgements of their intelligence, ambition and industriousness.

In an early study demonstrating that warmth alone does not capture the essence of people's judgements of others, Rosenberg, Nathan and Vivekananthan (1968) gave their participants 64 cards, each with a commonly used personality trait descriptor. Participants were asked to sort cards into piles to indicate which clusters of traits were displayed by particular people they knew. Rosenberg et al. found that these cards could reliably be categorized in two dimensions. Participants tended to think that people they knew were high or low on social traits (good or bad) and intellectual traits (good or bad). Acquaintances were often perceived as having good social traits but bad intellectual traits, and vice versa; on the other hand, acquaintances were less often perceived as having a mixture of good and bad social traits, or of good and bad intellectual traits.

Later, Lydon, Jamieson and Zanna (1988) asked participants to form impressions of strangers who were described as sharing (or not) their hobbies and interests (activity preferences) or their beliefs on important social topics (attitude similarity). Participants perceived strangers who shared their activity preferences as warm, and strangers who shared similar attitudes as intelligent – an important aspect of competence. Sometimes, different areas of research use different terminology for the same basic distinction. For example, researchers often use 'social utility' (utility here meaning usefulness) to refer to the kinds of traits (hardworking, intelligent, ambitious) that competence comprises, and 'social desirability' to refer to the kinds of traits (honesty, trustworthiness, friendliness) that warmth comprises (e.g., Alves, Pereira, Sutton & Correia, in press; Beauvois & Dubois, 2009; Darnon, Dompnier, Delmas, Pulfrey & Butera, 2009). This research has led warmth and competence to be described as the **'Big Two'** in impression formation and stereotyping (Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt & Kashima, 2005; Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008; Pietraszkiewicz et al., in press).

The 'Big Two'
A term coined by Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt and Kashima (2005), based on the 'Big Five' in personality research, to capture the idea that warmth and competence are the two central traits in perceptions of people and groups.

The important role of competence in impression formation was also highlighted by replications and extensions of Asch's (1946) original study. Zanna and Hamilton (1972) noticed a bias in the personality descriptions that Asch gave to participants: 'intelligent', 'skilful', 'industrious', 'determined', 'practical', 'cautious', and either 'warm' or 'cold'. In this list, only 'warm' or 'cold' refers to how nice a person is; all the other words refer to how competent they are. Zanna and Hamilton reversed this bias, for example by describing people as 'warm', 'sociable', 'good-natured', 'humorous', and either 'industrious' or 'lazy', so that only the words 'industrious' or 'lazy' referred to how competent they are; all the other words referred to their warmth. In this condition of their experiment, these competence-related words made a huge difference to participants' overall evaluation of a person. The trait words that seemed to be most 'central' were the trait words that, alone, referred to one of the Big Two. In a later study, Nauts, Langner, Huijsmans, Vonk and Wigboldus (2014) attempted to replicate Asch's (1946) studies with some relatively minor refinements and obtained different results to Asch. Consistent with Zanna and Hamilton (1972), competence was as important as warmth, and sometimes appeared to be even more important, than warmth in shaping the overall impression of a stranger.

Alongside warmth, competence also plays a crucial role in the perception of groups (Fiske, 2018). Groups can be seen as warm but incompetent, and, as we shall see in Chapter 11, this kind of perception is often attached to relatively powerless or disadvantaged groups in society, including women (Glick & Fiske, 1996). In contrast, more powerful groups such as the rich, citizens of powerful countries like Germany, or dominant and successful minority groups such as Asians, are often stereotyped as cold but competent (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002). There is even some evidence that judgements of a group's warmth and competence are negatively

related. That is, the more a group is judged as warm, the less is it judged as competent (and vice versa), especially when it is being compared to another group (Kervyn, Yzerbyt & Judd, 2010; Yzerbyt, Provost & Corneille, 2005).

In their stereotype content model, Fiske, Cuddy, Glick and Xu (2002) argued that a group's perceived warmth and competence depend on different factors. Another group will be seen as warmer if it is perceived to cooperate with one's own group, and colder if it is perceived to be competitive with the ingroup – for example seeking to gain jobs, economic dominance or prestige at the expense of the ingroup. On the other hand, a group will be seen as competent if it is high in status, and incompetent if it is low in status. Their studies showed that in ratings of various societal groups (occupational, ethnic, national), competitiveness was indeed correlated with warmth, and status was correlated with a group's perceived competence.

Fiske, Cuddy Glick and Xu's (2002) results also showed that emotional reactions towards groups varied according to perceptions of warmth and competence (See Figure 3.5). Warm and competent groups evoked emotions of admiration and pride. Warm but incompetent groups evoked emotions of sympathy and pity. Cold and competent groups evoked envy,

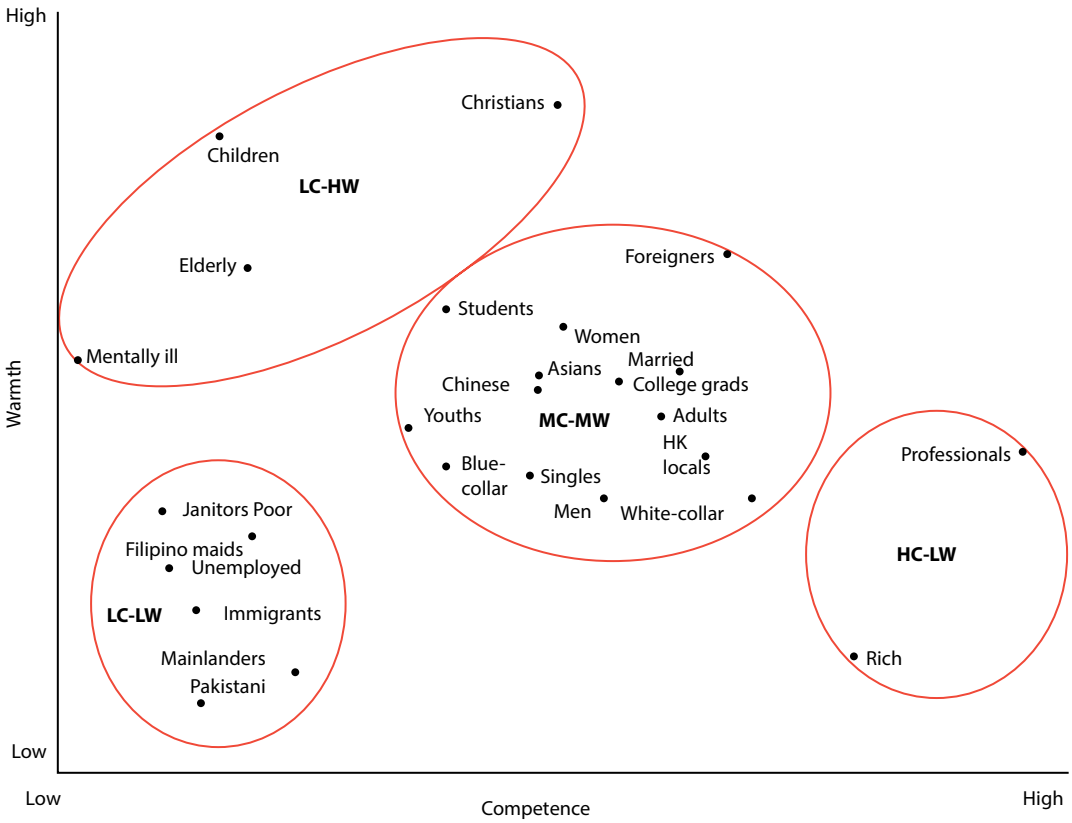

FIGURE 3.5 BIAS map In the BIAS map derived from the stereotype content model, groups can be organized according to whether they are seen as high or low in each of competence and warmth. In this example, groups are positioned according to how they were stereotyped by American participants. These groupings correspond to emotional and behavioural reactions. People admire groups that are stereotyped as high in both warmth and competence (including one's own group – here it would be university students, not pictured), and tend to help them, either actively or passively. Groups stereotyped as high in warmth but low in competence (here, including children and the elderly) are pitied and may be passively harmed (e.g., marginalized) or actively assisted. Groups stereotyped as low in warmth but high in competence are envied and may be either passively helped or actively harmed. Groups stereotyped as low in both competence and warmth are held in contempt and are harmed, either actively or passively.

Source: Cuddy, Fiske and Glick (2007). Copyright © 2007 by American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

and cold and incompetent groups evoked contempt (brain imaging studies also show that cold and incompetent groups are not processed as if they are fully human; see Harris & Fiske, 2009). Later, researchers built on the stereotype content model by showing that these emotional reactions to groups' warmth or competence shapes people's behavioural responses to those groups (Bye & Herrebrøden, 2018; Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2007; Sadler, Kaye & Vaughn, 2015), and shapes them more powerfully than the warmth or competence stereotypes themselves (Talaska, Fiske & Chaiken, 2008).

While for some decades research has shown that warmth is not the only central trait in person (and group) perception, a newer line of research appears to show that warmth is not necessarily a single trait. It is possible to separate it into two components: perceptions of sociability (how friendly and open a person seems), and morality (whether they have a good or bad moral character). Further, in most contexts morality may be more important than sociability. Leach, Ellemers and Barreto (2007) devised a scale that measured sociability and morality separately, and found that people's pride in their social groups was more strongly affected by their perception of its morality than its sociability or competence (Leach, Ellemers & Barreto, 2007). Brambilla, Rusconi, Sacchi, and Cherubini (2011) found that when participants were motivated to form an impression of a stranger, they spent more time searching for information about their morality than their sociability or competence (see also Goodwin, Piazza & Rozin, 2014). These researchers later found that when presented with morality (good or bad) and sociability (friendly or unfriendly) information about a stranger, the morality information carried more weight (Brambilla, Sacchi, Rusconi, Cherubini & Yzerbyt, 2013). Also, people are more likely to change their mind about a person when they encounter new information about their morality – good or bad – than about their sociability (Brambilla, Carrarro, Castelli & Scacchi, 2019).

If competence must be added to warmth as a central trait in how people judge each other, and warmth itself can be broken down into two components, are we on the road to an ever more complex, less elegant understanding of person perception? We don't think so. Although sociability and morality can be separated, and though this sometimes matters (e.g., most people would rather have an unfriendly but highly moral person look after their money, but not necessarily as company on the weekends), they are normally highly correlated with each other (Leach et al., 2007). It still makes sense to think of them, together, as 'warmth', separate from competence (Fiske, 2018). While competence cannot be ignored, a person's warmth is judged faster (Hack, Goodwin, & Fiske, 2013), is seen by people as more useful in predicting their behaviour (Kenworthy & Tausch, 2008), and more strongly affects emotional and behavioural reactions to others (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Fiske, Cuddy & Glick, 2007). The primacy of warmth, and its relation to competence, was beautifully captured by Wojciszke (1994, 2005): a person's (or group's) warmth tells you what they are likely to intend to do; their competence tells you whether they are likely to be able to do it. The second question is more interesting when we have some answer to the first one. This is why warmth may ultimately be *the* central dimension of person perception.

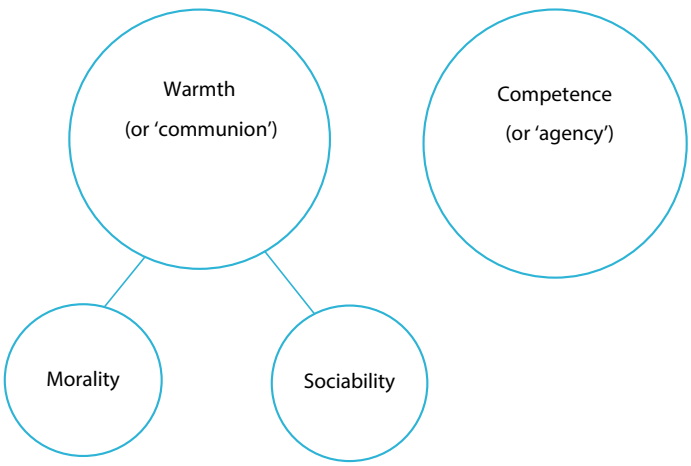

FIGURE 3.6 The 'Big Two' in social cognition Judgements about people and groups can be divided broadly into two central traits: warmth (also known as communion) and competence (also known as agency). Recent research suggests that warmth can be further decomposed into two traits: morality (encompassing qualities such as honest, trustworthy, loyal), and sociability (encompassing qualities such as friendly, relaxed, outgoing). There is growing evidence that morality may be more important to people than sociability.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Recent studies have discovered interesting new relationships between warmth (morality and sociability) and competence. Imhoff and Koch (2017) found that people can be seen to be too competent: at extreme levels of competence, just like low levels of competence, people are seen as less warm. There is, therefore, a 'Goldilocks zone', in which people's apparent competence is 'just right' and leads them also to be seen as warm. Can you think of why? Try reading their paper to see if your intuition and experience tallies with their explanation (note that like some other researchers they use 'communion' to describe warmth and 'agency' to describe competence). Likewise, Peters, Steffens and Morgenroth (2018) found that workers were less likely to see competent supervisors as role models if their supervisor was not moral. Landy, Piazza and Goodwin (2016) found that being more sociable and competent led an immoral person to be evaluated *more*, not less, negatively. Again, can you think why? Try reading their papers to see if your answer is supported by their results.

CRITICAL FOCUS

Are physical and psychological warmth related?

A well-known investigation by Williams and Bargh (2008) appeared to produce amazing evidence for the power of warmth judgements. In their first experiment (Study 1), participants were asked to hold either a warm or an iced cup of coffee. In the warm cup condition, participants rated a stranger's personality more 'warmly': for example, as generous and caring. In their second experiment, participants holding a warm (vs. cold) therapeutic heatpack also behaved more 'warmly', by choosing to buy a gift for a friend, rather than for themselves.

These studies appeared to support a remarkable theory that judgements of one's own or others' 'warmth' may be rooted in the physical, bodily experience of warmth (see the section on embodied social cognition in Chapter 4). However, although published in the highly prestigious journal *Science*, the studies did not have enough participants to support robust judgements. A subsequent attempt to replicate their second experiment failed. Lynott et al. (2014) did not observe any significant differences between the warm and cold pack conditions, despite running the experiment three times, each with larger samples than the original (for a reflection by the first author of the original paper, see Williams, 2014). A conceptually similar study went the same way: Bargh and Shalev (2012) reported that holding a warm (vs. cold) pack made people feel less lonely, but a subsequent attempt to replicate those findings, with a larger sample, failed to do so (Wortman, Donnellan & Lucas, 2014). Later, the first study of Willams and Bargh (2008), in which holding a warm drink led to more generous ratings of another person, also failed to replicate (Chabris, Heck, Mandart, Benjamin & Simons, in press).

Despite the inability of independent researchers to replicate the *specific* findings of Williams and Bargh (2008) and Bargh and Shalev (2012) in direct replications, there is evidence that 'physical' and 'psychological' warmth are related. IJzerman and Semin (2009, Study 1) found that participants who held a warm (vs. cold) drink rated themselves as 'closer' (more similar) to an acquaintance they had been asked to remember. This study is superficially similar to Williams and Bargh's (2008) first study. The other similarity, of course, is the independent variable – in both Bargh and William's Study 1, and IJzerman and Semin's Study 1, participants had to hold a warm or cold drink. However, the *dependent* variables are subtly but importantly different. Whereas Willams and Bargh (2008) assessed ratings of positivity towards another person, IJzerman and Bargh (2009) assessed ratings of closeness. The theory underpinning IJzerman and Semin's (2009) study is somewhat different, and confirmed by more independent studies, than Williams and Bargh's (2008) study. IJzerman and Bargh's is underpinned by the theory of *social thermoregulation* – that feelings

of physical warmth are closely related to feelings of psychological closeness to others, and affect the desire to move closer or further away. When you are warmer, you feel closer (and may want to move further away), and when you are colder, you feel further away (and may want to move closer). There is now good evidence that human beings, like other animals, do this (IJzerman et al., 2018). Williams and Bargh's, on the other hand, is underpinned by a theory of *priming* – that the physical feeling of warmth is supposed to be associated in people's minds with psychological warmth, and therefore can trigger warm evaluations of others.

Several (but not all, e.g., Grossman & Jowhari, 2018) priming effects have turned out to be some of the most fickle and difficult to replicate over the last decade or so in social psychological research (Cesario, 2014; Gilder & Heerey, 2018). Although it is perhaps grounded in more plausible theory, IJzerman and Semin's (2009) Study 1, like Williams and Bargh's (2008), did not have enough participants to reliably estimate how big the effect of physical warmth is, and its results could have been a 'fluke'. It has not, to our knowledge, been independently replicated, although a different study reported by IJzerman and Semin (2009) was later successfully replicated with a larger sample (Schilder, IJzerman & Denissen, 2014).

Questions

1. Using Google Scholar, look up how many times the studies of Lynott et al. (2014) and Wortman et al. (2014) have been cited. Then look up how often the studies they failed to replicate – respectively, Wililams and Bargh (2008), and Bargh and Shalev (2012) – have been cited, both overall, and since 2014 (to provide a fair comparison of how much attention the papers have received, year on year). What does the number of citations suggest to you about the potential for unreliable findings to have undue impact on subsequent theory, research and practice?
2. What social psychological processes – of the sort you are reading about in this chapter – might help to explain why unreliable findings can receive more attention than subsequent failures to replicate them? You may wish to return to this particular question after you have finished reading the chapter.

Algebraic model

Another model proposes that observers assign 'scores' to people on their traits and characteristics. When a person forms an impression of another person, they average out the scores to form an overall evaluation (Anderson, 1965a, 1996). This process is known as **cognitive algebra** – people assign positive and negative valence to various person attributes and combine them to be able to form a general evaluation of a person. For example, consider the two people in Table 3.1 who have been evaluated along various dimensions on a scale from −3 to +3, from least positive to most positive (e.g., Anderson, 1974). Each person has a 'score' on the first six traits (intelligent, hard-working, interesting, honest, friendly and funny). Based on the sums of their scores on these six traits, Kat comes out ahead, with a total of two, compared to 1.83 for James. Impressions of Kat should therefore be slightly more favourable.

Cognitive algebra Approach to the study of person perception proposing that people assign positive and negative valence to various person attributes and combine them to form a general evaluation of a person.

However, not all traits are equal all of the time. The example above describes the principal model of cognitive algebra that is based on **summation** (e.g., Betsch, Plessner, Schwieren & Gütig, 2001). Here, the overall impression is simply the total valence (that is, the net positive or negative nature) of all the pieces of information. Using this principle, a person wanting to make a positive first impression might want to conceal their lack of honesty and interestingness in favour of the traits where they score well. In this model of cognitive algebra, every small piece of positive information adds to the overall positive evaluation that can be formed.

Summation Model of cognitive algebra assuming that the overall impression that is formed is the total valence of all the pieces of information.

The model of **averaging** assumes that people's overall impression is formed by calculating the arithmetic mean of all the traits on display. Using the averaging principle rather than summation can make a real difference, as Table 3.1 shows. For example, if you already have a

Averaging Model of cognitive algebra assuming that the overall impression is the average of all the traits on display.

TABLE 3.1 Information integration

	Kat	James	Analyst weighting	Kat (analyst)	James (analyst)	Holiday rep weighting	Kat (rep)	James (rep)
Intelligent	3	1	3	9	3	0	0	0
Hard-working	3	–1	3	9	–3	1	3	–1
Interesting	2	2	0	0	0	2	4	4
Honest	2	2	2	4	4	1	2	2
Friendly	1	3	1	1	3	3	3	9
Funny	1	3	0	0	0	3	3	9
Total	12	9		23	7		15	23
Average	2	1.83		3.83	1.17		2.5	3.83
Athletic	1	–	The figures on the left reveal what happens if you were to gain enough information about Kat to form impressions of these traits. According to the most basic version of the algebraic model, your overall impression of Kat becomes more positive, because the new trait information is positive. But according to the averaging model, your overall impression becomes less positive, because the 6 new traits score less high, on average, than the first 6. In this example, your impression of Kat based on 12 traits is now less positive than your impression of James, based on 6.						
Healthy	1	–						
Polite	1	–						
Relaxed	0	–						
Popular	0	–						
Respected	1	–						
Total	16	–						
Average	1.67	–						

positive impression of someone, and learn new information that is still positive, then according to the summing principle, your impression becomes even more positive. In our example, the total 'score' for Kat, taking into account the 6 additional traits we have learned about, goes up from 12 to 16. However, according to the averaging principle, our impression of Kat becomes less positive. This is because the new trait information, while positive, is less positive than the first six traits. We divide the new total of 16 by 12 traits, whereas we had divided the old total of 12 by just 6 traits. In fact, knowing all 12 of these traits about Kat will lead to a less positive impression of her than that of James, based on the first six traits. Thus, one implication of the averaging model is that the positive impression a person projects may be diluted if more information is presented. It may therefore be wise to present only a small number of the most positive attributes one possesses so that the perceiver receives the best possible overall impression.

Weighted averaging Model of cognitive algebra assuming that people assign weights of importance to different traits in different contexts and form an overall impression of a person based on a weighted average.

This simple model of averaging is not without limitations either. It does not take into account the importance of different traits in different circumstances. For example, in judging a person's worthiness as a comedian, it would be typical to assign more importance to the trait of humour than honesty. Or, honesty and intelligence might be the most important traits in judging a politician. The model of **weighted averaging** takes into account the relative importance of traits in different circumstances (Anderson, 1981; Betsch, Kaufmann, Lindow, Plessner & Hoffmann, 2006). Using the example in Table 3.1, let us say you are evaluating the two people for a job as an analyst in an insurance company versus a holiday rep. Traits like intelligence and industriousness are important for the first job, while traits like being funny and friendly are important for the other. Taking into account how we might therefore weight

the different traits, Kat comes out ahead as the insurance analyst, but James comes out ahead as the holiday rep.

However, it is a common finding that negative information is generally weighted more heavily than positive information. This is called the **negativity bias** (e.g., Fazio, Pietri, Rocklage & Shook, 2015; Kanouse & Hanson, 1972; Skowronski & Carlston, 1989; Smith & Collins, 2009), so even using the weighted averaging model, a person wishing to create a positive impression of themselves would be wise to conceal their most negative traits from the perceiver. Interestingly, for reasons that are not understood, the negativity bias changes over the life span. Older adults appear to be biased towards positive trait information. For whatever reason, our neural activity seems to be less responsive to negative information as we age, but does not become less responsive to positive information (Cassidy, Leshikar, Shih, Aizenman & Gutchess, 2013; Kisley, Wood & Burrows, 2007).

Negativity bias
The common finding that negative traits are weighted more heavily than positive traits.

TIME TO REFLECT

Think of some of the people you know and your impressions of them. How are they influenced by the context in which you interact with them? Come up with your own table of traits and work out how people might be perceived differently depending on the summation, averaging and weighted averaging processes of cognitive algebra.

The weighted average model of person perception has gained a good deal of support from research evidence (Singh & Simons, 2010). While it is a good model of how an overall impression of a person is built up from impressions of their personality traits, it does not attempt to explain how we form impressions of their specific traits in the first place. It also does not take into account the order in which we learn about their positive and negative traits. Trait impressions are formed quickly, and they have to be. If it takes you too long to identify a criminal, your bank account might be cleared out. If it takes you too long to work out that a potential match is not only physically attractive but also has desirable personality traits, your competition may already have pounced. In the next few pages, we review the human ability to form first impressions quickly, with little apparent effort, and the ongoing importance of those first impressions.

The power of first impressions

The study of person perception has produced two striking and consistent findings. First, impressions are formed extremely quickly, with a surprising degree of accuracy. Second, these first impressions, even when they are wrong, carry a lot of weight. Having made a good first impression, you are more likely to be able to 'get away' with doing bad or stupid things without too much damage to your reputation. And if you make a bad first impression, it is difficult to overcome it. Just how quickly do we form impressions, and how do we do it? One way we do it is to judge a book by its cover, relying on visible and superficial cues that are presented by people's appearance and demeanour. For example, consider the three pictures in Figure 3.7. Which of these men do you think would be most likely to go to Comic Con? Which one might be a banker? Which one might be into rap music? We think you could make these decisions very quickly.

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Photo by Kyle Simmons on Unsplash

FIGURE 3.7 First impressions On this type of task, people generally agree on the likely activities (comic conventions, banking, rap) of these three individuals. This demonstrates that we form impressions of people quickly even though we know very little about them.

Research has explored two ways in which people judge a book by its cover. First, they extract a lot of information about people by observing brief, 'thin slices' of their behaviour. Some traits, such as extraversion, intelligence and conscientiousness, can be determined after five seconds of watching a video of another person. It can take longer to determine how neurotic, open to experience and agreeable a person is, but in general the optimal trade-off between accuracy and speed is reached at about 60 seconds (Carney, Colvin & Hall, 2007). It appears to take 30 seconds for ordinary people to be able to spot whether others have a personality disorder (Friedman, Oltmanns & Turkheimer, 2007), and to tell how effective they would be as salespeople (Ambady, Krabbenhoft & Hogan, 2006). In general, for reasons that are not entirely clear, women appear to be somewhat better at judging a book by its cover than men (Ambady, Hallahan & Rosenthal, 1995). Further, there is evidence that children are easier to 'read' than adults: Tackett, Herzhoff, Kushner and Rule (2016) found that strangers' impressions of childrens' personalities, based on small glimpses of their behaviour, were surprisingly strongly related to parental ratings of their personalities.

It is by no means clear exactly *how* people manage to do this. However, it appears to be important to 'go with your instincts' – thinking in a deliberate way seems to actually impair the ability to make quick but accurate judgements about others. As a result, sad and depressed people tend to be worse at this task, precisely because they try to think about it rather than doing it instinctively (Ambady & Gray, 2002; Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). People who are impaired in other ways (e.g., alcoholic and psychiatric patients) also tend to have poorer 'thin slice vision' compared to normal samples (Rosenthal, Hall, DiMatteo, Rogers & Archer, 1979). Also, there is little to no relationship between people's confidence in their judgements and their accuracy (Ames, Kammrath, Suppes & Bolger, 2010). This suggests that whatever techniques people are using, they do not have conscious access to them. Putting this all together suggests that we can thank automatic processes, occurring outside our awareness, for our extraordinary skills in person perception. We return to these unconscious processes later in the chapter.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Use the Internet to find other traits that ordinary, untrained people can judge by using 'thin slices' of behaviour or, even more minimally, photographs. Try searching terms like 'thin slice judgement' (you can try both British and American spellings), 'impressions' and 'traits'. Much of the research on judgements of personality from photographs uses the key phrase 'zero acquaintance'. Can you find any clues as to how people might be pulling off this trick?

Another way that people judge a book by its cover is to use an even more minimal source of information – people's physical appearance, as revealed, for example, by photographs (Walker & Vetter, 2016). Traits that people appear to be able to determine, better than chance, merely by looking at head and shoulder photographs stripped of all other cues include intelligence (Zebrowitz, Hall, Murphy & Rhodes, 2002), extraversion (how outgoing someone is), neuroticism (how anxious they tend to be) and psychoticism (how loose and dissociated their thinking is) (e.g., Shevlin, Walker, Davies, Banyard & Lewis, 2003). Viewing a still photograph of a stranger for as little as 50 milliseconds – one-twentieth of a second – can be enough to allow people to judge whether they are extraverted (Borkenau, Brecke, Mottig & Paelecke, 2009). A person's conscientiousness (Albright, Kenny & Malloy, 1988), honesty (Bond, Berry & Omar, 1994) and aggression (Berry and Brownlow, 1989) can also be determined, to some extent, by strangers merely on the basis of photographs.

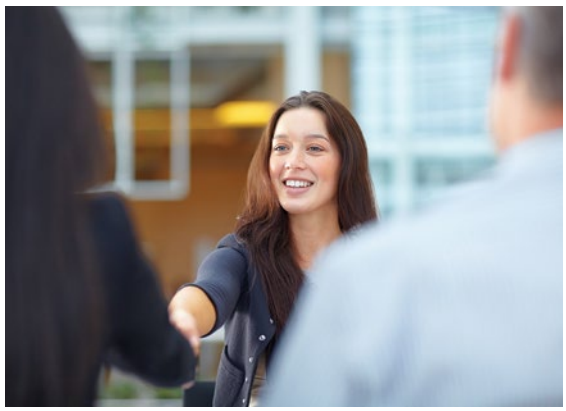
Given that we are not entirely sure how people can judge each others' characteristics from observing thin slices of their behaviour, it may not surprise you to learn that we do not understand how they do it from photographs, either. But this line of research

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

The real-life importance of first impressions

First impressions matter, whether based on brief glimpses of a person's behaviour or even on their facial appearance. First impressions in job interviews and other recruitment procedures powerfully predict hiring outcomes (Ingold, Dönni & Lievens, 2018; Nguyen & Gaticia-Perez, 2015). Members of the public judge scientific work to be of higher quality if the scientist has a face that is somehow judged to look like a 'good scientist' – an impression that was boosted if the scientist looked competent and moral, but undermined if he or she was attractive (Gheorgiu, Callan & Skylark, 2017). Other research shows that people who seem charismatic at first glance are more likely to be seen as prototypical leaders (Tskhay, Zhu & Rule, 2017). Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren and Hall (2005) found that political candidates' faces convey impressions of traits including competence. Candidates who were generally seen as more competent based on just a one second glance at their faces won power approximately 68 per cent of the time in a subsequent election.

People's ability to form first impressions can have discriminatory consequences. For example, neurotypical children and adults make a host of fast, negative judgements about their autistic peers, and are thus less willing to interact with them (Sasson et al., 2017). In a world where homosexuality remains criminalized in many countries, and somewhat stigmatized by some groups in all countries, gay people are at risk of severe discrimination if people can determine their sexuality just by looking at them, or seing a thin slice of their behaviour. Unfortunately, there is very good evidence that people can do just this: in other words, 'gaydar' is 'a thing'. In



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controlled experimental studies, heterosexuals were able to make this judgement fairly accurately based solely on a set of eight photographs, and gay participants were still more accurate (Ambady, Hallahan & Conner, 1999). Using photographs of straight and gay men taken from personal advertisements, research suggests that a 50 ms glance at a head and shoulders photograph of a man is enough for people to guess, at above-chance levels, whether he is gay (Rule & Ambady, 2008). Computer algorithms can do even better. Wang and Kosinski (2018) trained an algorithm to discern a person's sexual orientation from facial photos alone. In a sample of over 35,000 faces, it was able to accurately classify men's sexual orientation in 91 per cent of cases, and women's in 83 per cent.

This research shows that, sometimes, you can judge a book by its cover. Unfortunately, this exposes gay people to the risk of ongoing discrimination and, in many places,

persecution. The problem here with the formation of impressions based on superficial appearances or thin slices of behaviour is not that they are wrong or unreliable. In fact, people will often override superficial first impressions when they are later given more information (e.g., Gheorghiu, Callan & Skylark, 2018; for a review, see Cone, Mann & Ferguson, 2017). Rather, the problem is that first impressions are so often *right*. This is an important point given that so much of the study of stereotypes and prejudice focuses on wrong or unwarranted judgements that people can make (see Chapter 11). Research on first impressions suggests that problems between social groups can be caused by accurate, as well as incaccurate, judgements.

Questions

1. A wealth of research evidence suggests that people make reasonably accurate judgements about people based on very little information. Can you find an example of a research study that found the opposite (e.g., by using Google Scholar)? What was different about this study from those you have read about so far in this chapter?
2. Read the paper by Wang and Kosinski (2018) and perhaps other papers by the same team, who have shown that our digital footprints, such as Facebook likes, can be used to determine our sexual orientation (Kosisnki, Stillwell & Graepel, 2013) and our personality (Youyou, Kosinski & Stillwell, 2015; for a review see Hinds & Joinson, 2018). What ethical issues are raised by this research (consulting the Research Ethics section in Chapter 1 on informed consent)? Obviously, computer algorithms like this can be used to do harm: for targeted political campaigns and other forms of aggressive, covert marketing and surveillance, and even harassment and discrimination on the grounds of sexuality or political preference. It is a safe bet that if psychological researchers can build these algorithms, then so can, and likely so are, other actors, representing corporate and political interests. How do you think it is possible for private citizens, officials and research psychologists to help protect themselves and the public from abuses of this technology? (For some scientific, ethical, legal and policy perspectives, see Brayne, Levy & Newell, 2018; Grätz, 2018; Whiskerd, Dittmann & Vielhauer, 2018.)

has produced some intriguing clues. Engell, Haxby and Todorov (2007) presented a set of faces to Princeton University undergraduates, and asked them to rate them for trustworthiness. While they were doing this, they were inside a functional magnetic resonance imager (fMRI) – a machine that can track changes in blood flow within the brain as it engages in different tasks, commonly used in social neuroscience studies (see Chapter 1). Of particular interest was increases in blood flow to the amygdala, a structure at the rear of the brain that is associated with judgements of trustworthiness (Adolphs, Tranel & Damasio, 1998; Winston, Strange, O'Doherty & Dolan, 2002), among other functions associated with the processing of emotional information. They predicted, and found, that as a participant found a face less trustworthy, activity in their amygdala would increase. However, something startling happened when the researchers controlled statistically for how trustworthy all the participants had found each face, on average. Each participant's amygdala response was better predicted by this consensual rating of the faces than by their own rating. Apparently, the human amygdala is capable of putting faces into boxes – faces that are generally agreed to be trustworthy or untrustworthy – independently of the conscious decision of its 'owner'. In other words, the amygdala 'lights up' in response to trustworthy and untrustworthy features of stimulus faces that are there for everybody to see, and not as a result of the individual decision of the perceiver. Here, then, is evidence that strongly suggests that our brains have learned, or are hard-wired, to detect personality traits based on features of people's faces (see also Mieth, Bell & Buchner, 2016; Ritchie, Palermo & Rhodes, 2017).

But what features are important in judgements of trustworthiness and untrustworthiness? In a sophisticated set of studies blending experimentation with computer modelling, Oosterhof and Todorov (2008) found that high perceived trustworthiness is associated with happy expressions, and low perceived trustworthiness is associated with angry expressions. Look a

little happy, and you will be more likely to appear trustworthy; look a little angry, and you will not. Although stimulus faces are generally pretested to ensure they are emotionally neutral, some people just have faces that look a little bit angry or a little bit happy most of the time (as suggested by the expression 'bitchy resting face'). Engell, Todorov and Haxby (2010) suggest that to judge a trait like trustworthiness from these kinds of subtle emotional expression cues may not be accurate. Rather, angry people (like untrustworthy people) are to be avoided, and happy people (like trustworthy people) may be approached. Common brain systems may be involved in the evaluation of emotions and personality characteristics that suggest people should also be approached or avoided.

Using some facial cues *is* likely to lead to accurate judgements. The wider your face (width-to-height ratio), the higher your exposure to testosterone as you were developing, and the more likely you are to be aggressive in laboratory experiments or during professional sports (Carre & McCormick, 2008). Even more fascinatingly, others can tell – people with wider faces are seen as more aggressive (Carre, Morrissey, Mondloch & McCormick, 2010).

It is worth pausing to consider the use of one facial cue that does not lead to accurate judgements – attractiveness. A person's physical appearance (and most notably their attractiveness) can influence the impression they make, but this may not reflect who they actually are. In one study demonstrating the influence of appearance, Dion, Berscheid and Walster (1972) told participants they were participating in a study of the accuracy of social perception. They were to look at photos of actual people whose characteristics were purportedly being measured in another longitudinal study. Thus, participants thought that their responses would be compared to 'expert' ratings of the targets. The targets were preselected for different levels of physical attractiveness as judged by a set of independent raters. Participants were presented with one attractive face, one face of average attractiveness and one unattractive face. Some striking results were found (see Figure 3.8). Specifically, attractive people were perceived to have the most socially desirable personality, higher marital competence and a more desirable occupational status. Thus, being attractive is seen to be associated with more desirable personality characteristics and life outcomes. Research suggests that this belief is wrong – although attractive people are seen as nicer, they are not actually nicer. However, it might be that nicer (more agreeable and extroverted) people take care more over their appearance in day-to-day life (Meier, Robinson, Carter & Hinsz, 2010).

There are many other effects associated with physical attractiveness. For example, teachers excuse the misbehaviours of attractive children but blame children who are unattractive (Dion, 1972). Attractive men receive higher starting salaries than unattractive men and this continues over the course of their career (Frieze, Olsen & Russell, 1991). Also, physically attractive defendants in court tend to be set lower bails (Downs & Lyons, 1991). It seems that people associate better success and better outcomes with being attractive, so that attractive people tend to be perceived positively across a variety of domains.

However, as Heilman and Stopeck (1985) found, this is further influenced by gender. In their study, they asked male and female MBA students to participate in a study of 'personnel decision making'. Participants looked at pictures of various

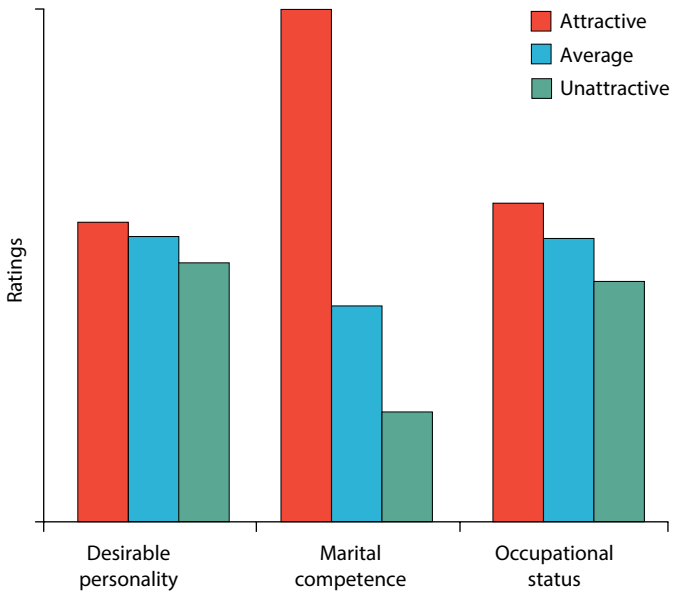

FIGURE 3.8 The influence of appearance on ratings of stimulus people Attractive people are rated as having a more socially desirable personality, greater marital competence and higher occupational status.

Source: Data from Dion et al. (1972)

male and female targets and read their employee profiles. The first independent variable was the type of job (managerial or clerical), the second was the gender of the employee (male or female) and, finally, the experimenters manipulated the targets' attractiveness (more or less attractive). The dependent variables were performance evaluation and advancement potential. Heilman and Stopeck found that, for male employees, being attractive or unattractive did not matter, whether in a clerical or managerial position. However, for female employees, attractiveness was seen as an asset in a clerical position but not in a managerial position. The researchers argued that this occurred because of a lack of fit between the categories. Specifically, being attractive and female does not fit with the characteristics of being a good manager. This research can also be understood in terms of objectification theory, according to which women are frequently reduced to the status of objects and equated with their physical appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Roberts, Calogero & Gervais, 2018; see Chapter 11).

Research also reveals how being good-looking can be a double-edged sword. In particular, although it normally encourages members of the 'other' sex to assign positive personality characteristics to you, it can have quite the opposite effect on members of the same sex. For example, Agthe, Sporrle and Maner (2011) had undergraduate students rate rival candidates for a job, whose applications included a photograph. Both male and female participants rated more attractive 'other-sex' candidates as more qualified for the job (even though, photos aside, the CVs and applications were identical). However, they also rated more attractive 'same-sex' candidates as *less* qualified for the job (see Figure 3.9). This suggests, of course, that attractive, same-sex people may be derogated because they are seen as a threat. The results of a second study reported by Agthe et al. (2011) supported this idea. High self-esteem participants, who were presumably secure in themselves and less prone to feeling threatened, were biased towards, rather than against, attractive same-sex candidates. In another study, Phillips and Hranek (2011) showed male and female university students a photograph of an attractive or unattractive woman student, and were asked to imagine the student letting them down on a group presentation assignment. Would they forgive her, if she apologized? 'Yes', said the male students, if she was attractive rather than unattractive. 'No', said the female students, under the same conditions.

Correspondent inference The attribution of a personality trait that corresponds to an observed behaviour.

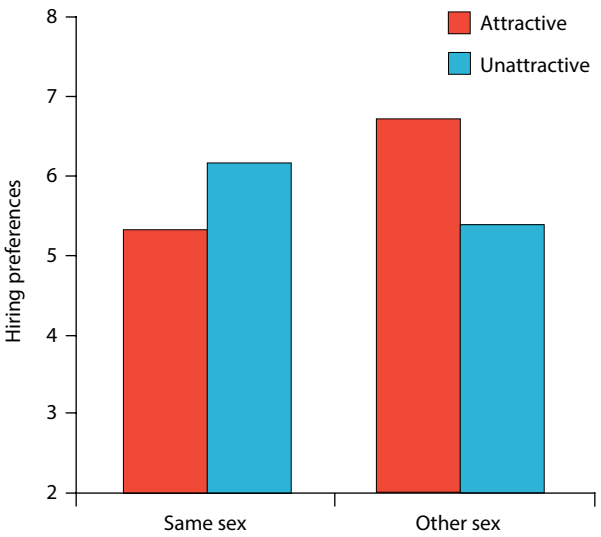

FIGURE 3.9 Hiring other-sex or same-sex candidates
Male and female participants alike (in Germany) preferred to hire other-sex candidates if they were attractive (vs. unattractive), and same-sex candidates if they were unattractive (vs. attractive).
Source: Data from Agthe et al. (2011)

It is clear that judging a book by its cover leads to mixed results in impression formation. But this is not the only way we form impressions of people quickly. Another much studied process that underpins the rapid formation of first impressions is **correspondent inference**, which we have already discussed with respect to attribution. When we see someone act in a greedy, hostile, kind or intelligent way, we automatically, and rapidly, infer that they must be greedy, hostile, kind or intelligent, accordingly. If you are cut up by a motorist driving aggressively, you are less likely to think, 'They must be in a hurry', than 'They are a bad driver' (or worse). Many studies show that we do this, even when we are not asked to make such inferences (e.g., Carlston & Skowronski, 1994).

Todorov and Uleman (2003) used a clever methodology to uncover these 'spontaneous trait inferences'. They showed participants 60 pairs of photos of strangers with sentences describing the people doing things, such as 'Alice solved the mystery halfway through the book'.

Later, they showed photos of the same people, with captions of the trait that was implied by their behaviour (in this case, 'clever'). They were asked to indicate whether this word appeared in the sentence they had read earlier. Of course, it had not; nonetheless, participants tended to falsely recognize the word, especially when they saw the initial sentences for a short period of time, when they were not thinking about the sentence deeply (e.g., when they were counting nouns), and when their minds were on another task they had been asked to do by the experimenter.

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These findings reinforce a point made some years before in a study by Gilbert and Osborne (1989). They showed participants a video of a young female confederate, minus sound, who appeared to be acting very nervously (e.g., fidgeting with her hair, biting her nails, moving around in her seat). One group of participants was told that she was being asked to talk about positive or neutral topics (such as travel or books). In this experimental condition, participants have no good reason to suspect that despite her behaviour, the confederate is not a nervous person. In contrast, another group of participants was told that she was discussing nerve-wracking topics (imagine being asked to discuss your fears and phobias, or painful childhood memories on video). In this condition, according to classic models of person perception and causal attribution, we should engage in a process of **discounting** (Morris & Larrick, 1995). Her nervous behaviour should be discounted in light of the information about the situation – any normal person would be nervous talking about their painful childhood experiences on video. Thus, the normal correspondent inference – she is acting nervously, therefore she is a nervous person – should be tempered.

Discounting
Seeing a cause of a behaviour as less important when another cause becomes known.

This happened, so long as participants had sufficient thinking powers, or cognitive resources, free. When Gilbert and Osborne (1989) gave some of the participants something else to do – a task in which they had to memorize a list of words being read out to them while watching the video – the topic the woman was ostensibly discussing made no difference. Under this **cognitive load** manipulation, participants found it impossible to disregard the visible behaviour of the woman and so correspondent inferences dominated. For Gilbert and Osborne, this was evidence that people automatically make correspondent inferences. They will fall prey to the correspondence bias we discussed earlier – the tendency to ascribe correspondent traits to people even though the situation is more likely to have caused their behaviour – except when they are sufficiently motivated and able to correct for their first, biased impression. People in non-Western cultures also appear to be prone to this effect, although perhaps more weakly than Westerners (Lee, Shimizu & Uleman, 2015; Shimizu, Lee & Uleman, 2017).

Cognitive load
Condition in which a task demands a person's attention and thinking capacity, leaving little left for another task. This is often manipulated by experimenters to determine whether a second task requires conscious thought and control.

As we mentioned, first impressions are not only made quickly, but they are hard to shake. People tend to assign greater importance to the traits they observe first. It is common wisdom that first impressions are important, and indeed this is often true. For example, Asch (1946) asked participants to form an impression of a person after reading a list of adjectives. Crucially, for half the participants, the positive traits appeared first (e.g., intelligent) and for the other half, the negative traits appeared first (e.g., impulsive). Participants' impressions were influenced by the information that appeared first, such that the first group of

participants formed more positive impressions of the target person than the second group. This **primacy effect** implies that people may be wise to 'put their best foot forward' because social perceivers tend to pay more attention to information that is observed first.

TIME TO REFLECT

Why do you think first impressions count? Read the rest of this chapter and see if you can find at least two social cognitive principles that help to explain why the first information we receive about a person is so important.

Primacy effect Bias in person perception such that people remember (and assign the most importance to) the traits they observe first.

Recency effect Bias in person perception such that people remember (and assign the most importance to) traits they observe most recently.

People sometimes pay more attention to information that is observed most recently. This is called the **recency effect** (Anderson, 1971; Fang, van Kleef & Sauter, 2018; Mayo & Crockett, 1964). Although primacy effects are most commonly observed, it is important to consider that people may be more likely, at least in demanding situations, to attend to information that is most recently presented. A motivational explanation for both primacy and recency effects found support in an experiment by Richter and Kruglanski (1998). People, especially when they are high in the desire to form a definite, clear, unambiguous impression of others, tend to 'seize' on the most easily accessible information they have. If you have the goal to form an impression of a person when you first meet them, which, as we have seen, seems to be the case normally, then you are likely to 'seize' on the first piece of information you receive about them. If, on the other hand, you have a goal of forming an impression of a person after you have known them for a while, the last piece of information you learned about them may be the most accessible. Reassuringly, there is some recent evidence that bad first impressions are more easily overcome: people feel more uncertain about the negative first impressions they form, and thus update them more readily when they are contradicted by later information (Siegel, Mathys, Rutledge & Crockett, 2018).

Person memory

Associative network Memory model whereby ideas or nodes are connected by associative links.

How much do we remember about people? How do we organize the information we learn about people? To answer these questions, social psychologists have turned to cognitive psychological theories of memory and, in particular, the notion of **associative networks** (Smith, 1996). This type of memory model assumes that people store propositions, which consist of ideas or nodes that are linked by the associations between them. For example, various propositions (e.g., seeing a person is kicking a ball, the ball is a football, the person is wearing a football kit) have various nodes (e.g., person, kicking, ball, football kit), which are related to, or associated with, each other. In this type of memory model, some links between nodes are stronger than others but links can become stronger the more they are rehearsed. In other words, the more people think about someone kicking a football, the more the peson becomes associated with the sport and the easier it becomes for them to remember that this person is sporty. Memories are also more likely to be recalled if there are multiple memory routes, or more ways to retrieve the memory. Recalling involves the activation of nodes and the subsequent activation of related nodes along associative links. If someone recalls a person kicking a ball, they are also likely to think of football because these nodes are strongly associated. In keeping with this idea, there is evidence that people who are especially good at remembering information about others have more densely connected neural networks in the 'white matter' of the brain (Metoki, Alm, Wang, Ngo & Olson, 2017).

This type of associative network model can explain specific processes related to person memory. For example, if we have a strong impression of a person, we tend to remember information that is consistent with our impression (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). Perhaps counterintuitively, however, people tend to more successfully recall information about a person if it is inconsistent with their general impression of the person (Bell, Mieth & Buchner, 2015). For example, we might be more likely to

recall that a person likes sewing if we know they are also a professional wrestler. Social psychologists argue this happens because information that is inconsistent with impressions demands more attention, generates more thought and thus strengthens the links between nodes. This may reflect people's increased effort to reconcile information with their beliefs (Hastie, 1988; Srull & Wyer, 1989).

What does person memory consist of and how do we use it?

Theorists generally assume that person memory is organized so that positive and negative features are clustered together. More specifically, and in keeping with the 'Big Two' model we discussed earlier, Schneider, Hastorf and Ellsworth (1979) argued that trait information is typically organized around the dimensions of competencies (e.g., intelligence) and socially desirable characteristics (e.g., friendliness). Trait inferences about a person are a result of complex processes of assigning causal attributions for people's behaviours. Memory for appearance is typically based on observable information (e.g., Lydia has brown eyes) and is stored like a 'picture in the mind'. Memory for behaviours is typically organized with respect to the person's goal in performing a behaviour (e.g., Hannah swore at her sister because she was in a hurry and her sister was in her way) (Hoffman, Mischel and Mazze, 1981).

Typically, people remember others as a cluster of traits, appearances and behaviours, especially if they know them well, as is the case for close friends and family. According to Sedikides and Ostrom (1988), this produces more accurate person memories that are easily recalled. However, when we first encounter an individual, we may not be familiar enough with their traits to be able to organize a set of useful information about them. Instead, we may organize our impression of that person by judgements we make based on their group membership. As we will discuss later in this chapter, people rely heavily on information about groups – namely stereotypes – in order to make social judgements. People are more prone to making memory errors about members of stigmatized group members (e.g., gay people), especially when they feel personally threatened (e.g., Pica, Bélanger, Pantaleo, Pierro & Kruglanski, 2016).

HEURISTICS AND BIASES IN SOCIAL COGNITION

We are by no means perfect scientists. We lack the time, information and sheer processing power to always make perfect judgements. Thus, we are prone to using certain *heuristics*. Heuristics are rules of thumb that can be used to make judgements that are not 100 per cent reliable, but which give an approximately accurate answer in most situations. In a set of studies that helped Daniel Kahneman later win the Nobel Prize for economics, he and his colleague Amos Tversky (Kahneman & Tversky, 1973; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) discovered that people use three key heuristics to guide their decision making in everyday situations – the representativeness heuristic, the availability heuristic, and the anchoring and adjustment heuristic. We discuss these heuristics in turn and then discuss some other biases that affect our social cognition.

The representativeness heuristic

One of the most basic tasks in social cognition is categorization – essentially deciding which social categories people belong to. Categorizing in a reliable way requires a lot of information and complex reasoning processes that may not be within our reach. In order to get the job done, we often take a shortcut – we put people into a category simply on the basis that their attributes seem similar to, that is, representative of, other members of that category – the **representativeness heuristic**. For example, suppose you begin to get to know Tony, a neighbour in his thirties, who is shy, quietly spoken, very neat, helpful and always reading. If you were to guess his occupation, you might say that he is a librarian; certainly this occupation feels like a more likely guess than, say, a plumber. This guess may often turn out to be right, and so the heuristic often serves us well. However, it is unreliable and can lead us into error. It can dangerously ignore so-called **base rates**; for example,

Representativeness heuristic A cognitive shortcut where people are placed in categories based on their similarity or resemblance to the category.

Base rates Factual information about people and categories.

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the fact that there are many more plumbers than librarians. If you knew absolutely nothing about Tony except that he was a man in his thirties, and were still asked to guess his occupation, you would be much more likely to say he is a plumber than a librarian.

The tendency to pay insufficient regard to base rates because of the representativeness heuristic is illustrated by the **conjunction fallacy**. Here is an example – let us say that, after a while, you also notice that your neighbour Tony uses a hemp bag and cycles everywhere rather than driving. This, on top of everything else you know about him, is likely to tempt you into thinking he is not only a librarian but also an environmentalist. This is because he appears to be representative of both categories. Indeed, Tversky and Kahneman (1983) showed that when equipped with this kind of information, people indicated that conjunctions (that is, statements that suggest that people are a member of two categories), such as 'Tony is an environmentalist librarian', were judged more likely than either of the single statements, 'Tony is a librarian', or 'Tony is an environmentalist'. Logically, however, this cannot be correct. Each statement might be wrong, and if either is wrong, then the conjunction is wrong. If Tony is not an environmentalist, *or* he is not a librarian, then he is not an environmentalist librarian. Thus, the probability of the joint statement being correct can only ever be as high as the probability of the less likely single judgement, and it will be lower so long as the other statement is not 100 per cent guaranteed to be accurate. The conjunction fallacy has been shown to be highly robust (e.g., Costello & Watts, 2017; Erceg & Galić, 2014; Tentori, Crupi & Russo, 2013), and related to other errors or biases in reasoning, including paranormal beliefs (Rogers, Davis & Fisk, 2009) and conspiracy theories (Brotherton & French, 2014). Many conspiracy theories, for example that the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York or the death of Princess Diana were inside jobs, are rather elaborate, tying together a number of more specific beliefs about various alleged actions by several people. Like the belief that Tony is an environmentalist librarian, conspiracy theories are vulnerable to the possibility that any one of these specific beliefs is wrong (Brotherton & French, 2014; Grimes, 2016).

Conjunction fallacy The tendency to pay insufficient regard to base rates due to the representativeness heuristic.

Bodenhausen (1990) obtained results that are consistent with the notion that we use heuristics especially when we lack the cognitive resources to think through our judgements thoroughly. He asked participants a set of standard questions to determine their chronotype, in other words, whether they are a 'morning' person who is at their most alert and clear-minded in the earlier part of the day, or an 'evening' person who is at their peak later in the day. He then put them through a test of the conjunction fallacy in the morning or afternoon, where participants were asked to make judgements based on information such as that given above in the example of Tony. Consistent with previous research, the majority of participants committed the error. However, participants were more likely to do it when it was not their best time of day (e.g., 'evening' people taking part at 9am), and less likely to do it when the time of day suited them (e.g., 'evening' people taking part at 8pm). In a second experiment, Bodenhausen (1990) found that participants, at their 'wrong' time of day, were also more likely to rely on ethnic stereotypes when judging the guilt or innocence of a suspect (Figure 3.10). Under some circumstances, we may lean on stereotypes, just as we lean on the representativeness heuristic, when we do not have the cognitive resources to think more rationally. Bodenhausen's (1990) study also highlights the dependence of mind upon body – a major theme emerging in social psychology in recent years. There is evidence that a wide range of cognitive tasks are affected by the time of day at which they are measured (Schmidt, Collette, Cajochen & Peigneux, 2007). This variation is so large that it can render age-related declines in cognitive tasks statistically non-significant if cognitive tests are taken early in the morning (a time that suits older people, rather than young ones), rather than late at night (Maylor & Badham, 2018).

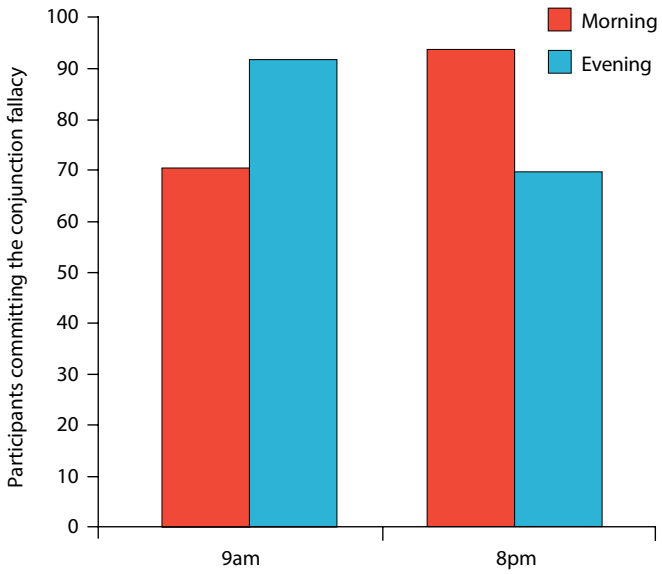

FIGURE 3.10 The conjunction fallacy related to chronotype People are highly prone to the conjunction fallacy, but Bodenhausen (1990) demonstrated that this also depends on whether they are asked at their 'time of day', that is, whether they are a morning or evening person. Participants in their 'wrong' time of day were more likely to commit the fallacy than those in their 'right' time of day.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Are you are morning or evening person? Psychologists have designed sophisticated self-report surveys to find out. Horne and Östberg (1976) devised a survey with 19 items; Adan & Almirall (1991) successfully boiled it down to 5 items, and more recently, Loureiro & Garcia-Marques (2015) found that just one item was enough to reliably assess whether someone is a morning or an evening person. Their question is simply: One hears about 'morning-types' and 'evening-types'. Which one of these types do you consider yourself to be?

- **Definitely a morning-type**
- **Rather more a morning-type than an evening-type**
- **Rather more an evening-type than a morning-type**
- **Definitely an evening-type.**

The mean response on this scale was between the two middle options, but slightly closer to 'Rather more a morning-type than an evening-type'. What does this say about you, other than the optimal time for you to take cognitive tests or avoid social cognitive errors? If you run 'chronotype' or 'morningness' and 'eveningness' through a search engine or academic database like Google Scholar, you can find out. You will find many papers that explore what this means for you. For example, evening-types tend to be higher in cognitive ability, but actually perform less well academically (Preckel, Lipnevich, Schneider & Roberts, 2011), in part – but only in part – because they are less conscientious (Randler, 2008; Ruffing, Hahn, Spinath, Brünken & Karbach 2015). They are also more narcissistic, Machiavellian and psychopathic, that is, higher on the so-called 'Dark Triad' personality traits (Jonason, Jones & Lyons, 2013). You can also search for what your score means – what are the characteristics that are typical of morning vs. evening people?

As we discussed in Chapter 1, human beings are unlike other objects of scientific study – fruit flies or molecules, for example – in a very important respect, which is that they actively think about the experimental procedure they are undergoing, and tend to wonder why the experimenter is presenting them with the tasks and materials of the experiment. If you are a participant in a conjunction fallacy

study, there is a good chance you will wonder, consciously or unconsciously, why the experimenter is telling you all this information that makes Tony look like both an environmentalist and a librarian. You are likely to infer they are making the case that Tony is both, otherwise, the experimenter would seem to be breaking the rules of normal conversation by presenting you with irrelevant information. For example, if they do not want you to infer that Tony is an environmentalist, why are they telling you about his hemp bags and green transport habits?

Dulany and Hilton (1991) found evidence that the conjunction fallacy not only (or even necessarily) reveals something profound about the erroneous processing of probabilities. It also shows that participants follow normal conversational rules by inferring that the experimenter is suggesting to them that people (e.g., Tony) belong to both categories (e.g., environmentalist, librarian). Indeed, Slugoski and Wilson (1998) measured participants' conversational skills, reasoning that some people are better at understanding and following the rules of conversation than others. They found that those with better conversational skills were more prone to the conjunction fallacy and other apparent errors of judgement. Using good conversational logic and reading between the lines of what an expert is telling you about Tony may be a more effective, more social way to learn about your social environment than relying on base rate probabilities.

Other criticisms of the idea that people neglect base rates were put forward by Koehler (1996). One of Koehler's criticisms is that our social environment is full of rich and highly informative cues that sometimes tell us more than base rates ever could. Some of the cues in the conjunction fallacy are also so strong that they change the way the logic of probability should be applied. Let us say that Tony gives you two business cards. One is for his job as a librarian, the other for his role as an advocate in an environmentalist organization. You then have reasonably certain information that Tony is, indeed, both an environmentalist and a librarian. It is now less likely he is an environmentalist but not a librarian, because this would mean he is lying to you, and has gone to the trouble of giving you an invalid business card. Although the cues we considered before (e.g., the hemp bag, the cycling, the librarian-like demeanour) may be less certain than, say, business cards, if you have enough of them, you can become increasingly convinced that it is more likely that Tony belongs to both categories and not just one of them. In sum, the representativeness heuristic may be more reliable, in everyday life, than the use of base rates, which Tversky and Kahneman (1983) supposed to be more rational. However, it seems relatively clear that participants do not have such rich information in studies like Tversky and Kahneman's (1983). Thus, in these studies, it is reasonable to describe their judgement that Tony must be an environmentalist and a librarian as a fallacy, based on the apparent representativeness of Tony as a member of both categories. Even participants' reliance on the normal logic of conversation in such studies (Dulany & Hilton, 1991; Slugoski & Wilson, 1998) can be described as a normally useful, but sometimes misleading, heuristic.

The availability heuristic

Availability heuristic Using the ease with which information comes to mind as a cue to the reliability or importance of that information.

The **availability heuristic** is based on how available certain knowledge or ideas are to us when we make judgements. It is also known as the *ease-of-use heuristic*. A good illustration of the availability heuristic is to be seen in the aftereffects of seeing a good, scary film. People often enjoy 'freaking out' their friends after such films by playing tricks on them – jumping out of doorways at them and so on. Our readiness to interpret normally innocent stimuli, such as strange or sudden noises, shadows and so on, after seeing scary films is, in part, because scary interpretations of these stimuli are more mentally available to us. Thus, 'it's a monster' and other ideas – normally so far-fetched that they never occur to us – are much more at the forefront of our minds.

Schwarz et al. (1991) conducted one of the most well-known and compelling demonstrations of how the availability heuristic influences our thinking. To help you really get inside the logic of their experiment, we invite you to do the Exploring Further exercise below. It's worth the effort. Once you are finished, read on.

EXPLORING FURTHER

On a blank screen or piece of paper, write down 6 times you have been friendly, then 12 times you have been assertive. After doing this task, how friendly would you say you are? And how assertive?

Did you notice how difficult it is? The first few examples of assertiveness probably came easily, and then it became increasingly difficult. It would be understandable if you gave up at some point without generating all 12 examples. Schwarz et al. (1991) ensured that all their participants generated exactly the number of examples as they were instructed. Fortunately for *some* of their participants, they were not asked to generate as many as 12. Instead, they only had to generate 6. The number of examples (6 or 12) was the key independent variable in these experiments. The dependent variable was simple – participants were asked to rate how assertive they are. Intuitively, you might think that after generating 12, rather than only 6, examples of being assertive, participants would see themselves as more assertive. After all, they have just produced twice as much evidence of their assertiveness. But, in fact, participants saw themselves as less assertive after generating 12, rather than 6, examples of their assertiveness. Similarly, participants who were asked to recall 12 (vs. 6) unassertive behaviours rated themselves as less unassertive.

These results appear to show that people were led to believe they were unassertive (or assertive) because they had found it difficult to remember occasions in which they had acted accordingly. This is exactly in keeping with the availability heuristic. If evidence for an idea is difficult to bring to mind, people infer that the idea is less plausible. This is, essentially, a *causal attribution*, as we have been discussing throughout this chapter, that is: 'It's hard to remember times I was assertive because I'm not an assertive person.'

One of Schwarz et al.'s (1991) experiments provided clear evidence for the attributional processes underlying the availability heuristic. In addition to asking participants to generate either 6 or 12 assertive or unassertive behaviours, they were told either that most participants in a previous task had found this task difficult or easy. The rationale for this manipulation was participants should read more into their ease or difficulty of retrieval if they think it is unusual. If they think everyone finds the task similarly easy or difficult, then the effort they're expending probably won't seem to say anything about their assertiveness: 'It's not because I'm unassertive: others found this a difficult task too.' Under these conditions, participants who were asked to generate 12 examples of being assertive no longer assumed they were less assertive. If anything, the findings suggested that the more examples you listed, the more assertive you saw yourself (see Figure 3.11).

The anchoring and adjustment heuristic

As we have seen, people have an amazing, although not infallible, ability to make quick, reasonably accurate, initial judgements on the basis of very little information. According to Tversky and Kahneman (1974), we use these initial judgements as an anchor for our later judgements – the **anchoring and adjustment heuristic**. In other words, our first judgement is the one that, to a large extent, we stick with, making adjustments on the basis of later information. In an early demonstration, Jacowtiz and Kahneman (1995) asked participants to make estimates of various quantities – including the height of Mt Everest and the number of babies born each day – after being given an estimate that was clearly much too high or low. Participants' own estimates were subsequently biased by the number they were given. These findings were among the most reliable in a later 'Many Labs' replication project, meaning that they are robust and have stood the test of time (Klein et al., 2014).

Anchoring and adjustment heuristic
Cognitive shortcut where inferences are influenced by initial knowledge or information.

This heuristic is often exploited by retailers. Imagine, for example, that you are on holiday and see a coat in a store that you really like, priced at €200. It is just a little more than you

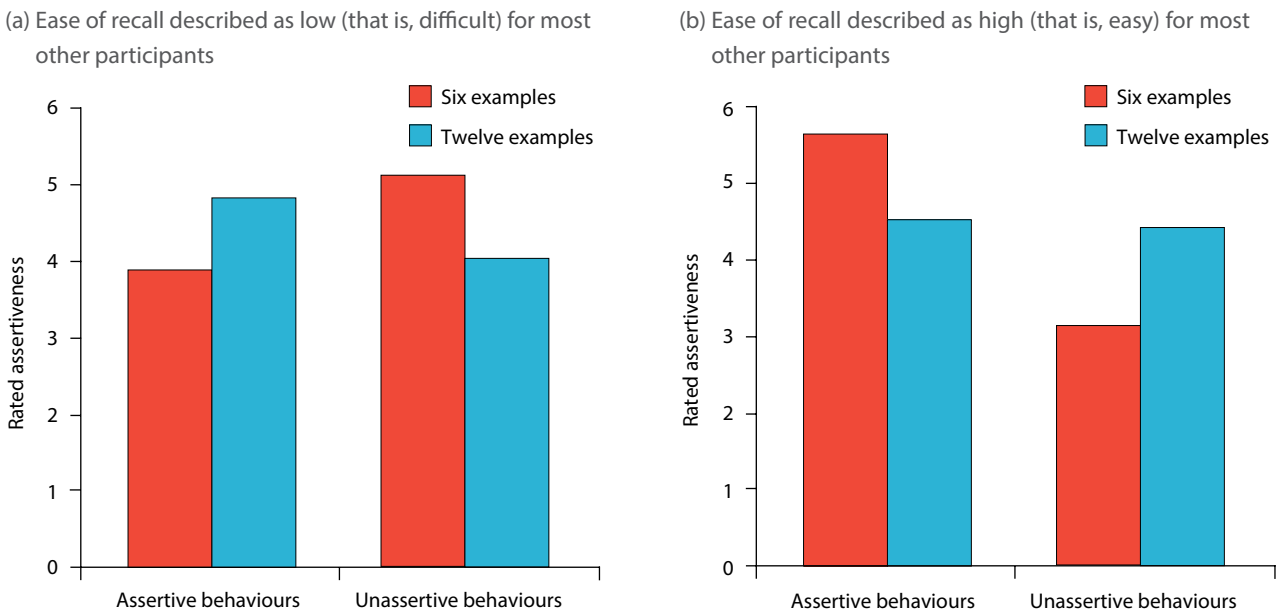

FIGURE 3.11 Attributional processes underlying the availability heuristic Participants placed in a condition where ease of recall was perceived to be low (a) were able to attribute their failure to the difficult task rather than their lack of assertiveness. When ease of recall was high (b), participants attributed their difficulty in generating examples to their assertiveness.

Source: Data from Schwarz et al. (1991)

can afford, so, reluctantly, you put it back on the rack and walk out. You visit another store and see the same coat priced at €150. Seems like a good buy, right? There is every chance that you will now buy it. However, if the first store had been charging €100 for the coat, you would feel that the €150 price is excessive. This is because the first price you came across for the coat – either €100 or €200, is the anchor by which you judge other information. It is only slowly, through multiple experiences, that you would revise your impression of how much the coat is really worth. It is possible to apply these principles to a cause other than pure profit. One can manipulate the price people are willing to pay for an environmental cause using the logic of anchoring and adjustment. If led to believe that a large investment was necessary, then people are more willing later to pay a lesser, although still large, amount (Knetsch, 2010).

This also has a clear application to negotiation (Pruitt, 1981; Rubin and Brown, 1975). If you want to obtain a good price, start with a low, even insulting offer. So long as the vendor does not immediately walk away from the deal having taken offence, this initial low offer will advantage you by serving as the 'anchor' by which subsequent prices are judged. The adjustments made to the starting price will result in a better deal, for you, than if a higher offer were later adjusted (Benton, Kelley & Liebling, 1972; Northcraft & Neale, 1987; Ritov, 1996). Studies show that this technique is especially potent if you make a very precise offer. An offer of €14,875 seems more plausible than one of €15,000, and is therefore more likely to alter the price that your negotiation partner will ultimately accept (Loschelder, Stuppi & Trötschel, 2014). On the other hand, Maaravi, Pazy & Ganzach (2014) found that although negotiators who went in with a very low offer 'won the battle' by driving down the price their countparts would accept, they also 'lost the war' in that their counterparts felt worse about the deal and were less willing to make subsequent deals with them.

OTHER BIASES AND ERRORS IN SOCIAL COGNITION

Heuristics illustrate the duality of human beings discussed in the opening to this chapter. Human beings are very clever, in the sense that they use reasoning strategies that generally

get them through the many social cognitive challenges of their everyday lives, but they are also not so clever, in that these strategies can seriously let them down. There are a number of other social cognitive errors that reflect this duality. People are prone to any number of biases and errors, because they use strategies that make a certain kind of sense, or help them cope with the demands of their lives. Creative thinking by experimental social psychologists exposes these strategies by catching participants in the act of making major, and sometimes amusing, errors.

Negativity bias

As we mentioned earlier, the valence (positivity or negativity) of information is important, and in particular, negative information tends to hold more weight in person perception than positive information (Fiske, 1980). Interestingly, this **negativity bias** may be more pronounced among politically conservative, compared to liberal, people (Hibbing, Smith & Alford, 2014; see also Chapter 4). People are also more inclined to share negative information with each other, which may reinforce the disproportionate effect it has on social judgements (Bebbington, MacLeod, Ellison & Fay, 2017). One reason for this is that, since most people behave well most of the time, negative information may appear more distinctive or extreme and therefore attract more attention (e.g., Skowronski & Carlston, 1989). Negative information therefore tends to be more *diagnostic* of the target than positive information. Unfortunately, once negative information has been presented and this influences the overall impression that is formed, it is difficult to defuse the negative information. Even presenting a multitude of positive information may not be enough to reverse a negative impression (e.g., Hamilton & Zanna, 1974). Therefore, information valence is an important feature in impression formation. The bias towards negative information is pervasive, and makes a certain kind of sense. Being predisposed to see the worst in people, animals and other objects has always helped us to avoid disease, poisoning, being killed or eaten. Whether fortunately or unfortunately, it also helps people to protect their cultural norms and values by sanctioning and removing the 'bad apples' who threaten them. According to one review, negative things, be they people, events or traits, are seen as more contagious than good things (Rozin and Royzman, 2001).

Negativity bias Attaching more weight or importance to negative than to positive information about people.

Hindsight bias

You may remember an occasion when you heard the result of a sporting match, election or some other competitive event. After hearing what happened, you said to yourself: 'Well, that was predictable!' But was it predictable, or is what you experienced the result of another common social psychological bias? In such a case, it is likely that the experience is an example of the **hindsight bias** – the tendency for people to exaggerate how much they could have predicted an outcome after it happened, which we discussed briefly in Chapter 1 with respect to people's perceptions of the predictability of social psychological findings (Choi & Nisbett, 2000; Fischhoff, 1975; Richard, Bond & Stokes-Zoota, 2001; Slovic & Fischhoff, 1977; Werth, Strack & Forster, 2002). Also known as the 'I knew it all along' phenomenon, the hindsight bias means that outcomes can seem inevitable and predictable once the outcome is known. In particular, people see the outcome as having been in line with their expectations, no matter what the outcome was. In other words, a completely different outcome would also be interpreted as being in line with one's expectations (Hawkins & Hastie, 1990).

Hindsight bias The tendency for people to exaggerate how much they could have predicted the outcome after it happened.

Many studies have documented the hindsight bias. For example, medical doctors are much better at identifying flaws in their colleagues' thinking when told their colleagues made an incorrect, rather than correct, diagnosis (Zwaan et al., 2017). The bias has also been shown in legal settings (e.g., Casper, Benedict & Perry 1989; Harley, 2007). In a study by Carli (1999), student participants read about a dating scenario between a pair called Barbara and Jack that ended in one of two ways – either with a marriage proposal or with a rape. The stories

were identical in every respect except for the final line. Nevertheless, people saw the ending as predictable in both situations. Two weeks later, the participants were also more likely to rate sentences as having been part of the story (when they were not), to the extent that the statement was consistent with the story's outcome. For example, people were more likely to agree that statements such as 'Jack was a drinker' appeared in the rape story rather than the marriage proposal story. Likewise, they were more likely to agree that statements such as 'Jack gave Barbara roses' appeared in the marriage proposal story rather than the rape story. Therefore, people's tendency to process information in this biased manner may influence how they understand and interpret important events.

Various factors have been found to influence the hindsight bias. For example, Roese and Olson (1996) showed that hindsight biases are more likely to occur for negative outcomes than positive outcomes. They argued that this is the case because negative events tend to trigger more sense-making cognitions such as **counterfactual thinking** (imagining alternatives to reality, or how things might have been different) and causal attributions. Other researchers have found that it is possible to attenuate the hindsight bias under certain conditions. For example, Arkes, Faust, Guilmette and Hart (1988) showed that people succumbed to the hindsight bias less if they were asked to provide at least one reason for the event. Arguably, if people are asked to provide concrete reasons, perhaps they have to rely less on 'filling the gaps'. Casper et al. (1989) observed hindsight biases in jury decision making and found that pre-existing attitudes also influence the extent to which people succumb to it (see also Harley, 2007).

Counterfactual thinking
Imagining alternatives to reality.

What causes the hindsight bias? Hoffrage, Hertwig and Gigerenzer (2000) argued that the bias may be adaptive. Specifically, after receiving feedback about an event, people update their knowledge, which leads them to exaggerate the extent to which they knew the result. For example, after finding out that her boyfriend cheated on her, a young woman has learned something about her boyfriend – that he is not terribly faithful. Armed with this new and unfortunate knowledge, his cheating on her does not seem to be so surprising (see Figure 3.12).

In another series of studies, Nestler, Blank and von Collani (2008) found that people who were under conditions of high cognitive load were more likely to commit hindsight bias, suggesting that

iStock.com/AntonioGuillem

FIGURE 3.12 The cheating boyfriend When this woman finds out that her boyfriend has been cheating on her, to what extent will she see this as expected?

EXPLORING FURTHER

There may be other causes of hindsight bias. Use an Internet search engine or psychology articles database to see if you can identify other reasons why it may be useful to have 'known it all along'. To get you started, people are less prone to the hindsight bias when they can clearly remember how much they expected the outcome before they found out what it was. Older adults' less reliable memories mean that they have more difficulty in remembering their past thoughts, and thus they are more prone to the hindsight bias (Groß & Bayen, 2015).

the psychological processes required to make accurate, non-biased judgements about outcomes require effort. Other researchers have argued that motivations may affect hindsight bias. People want to feel that events, especially negative events, are within their control, so that they can obtain some sense of optimism about the future. Thus, they tend to be less prone to hindsight bias following negative rather than positive events (Pezzo & Beckstead, 2008; Pezzo & Pezzo, 2007).

Confirmation bias

People tend to seek and to notice information that confirms their beliefs more than information that disconfirms them. They will even go so far as to ignore information that disconfirms their beliefs. This tendency is called the **confirmation bias** (Trope & Thompson, 1997). Alternatively, they may ask questions designed to confirm expectations. For example, if you meet a person from France for the first time, you might ask them about their love of cheese and red wine, or if you meet someone from Australia, you might ask them questions about going to the beach. Restricting the amount of information a person is able to provide enables expectations and stereotypes to be confirmed. Perceivers can therefore seek out information that confirms what they think.

Confirmation bias The tendency to notice or search for information that confirms one's beliefs and not notice (or even ignore) information that disconfirms one's beliefs.

Research by Westen, Blagov, Harenski, Kilts and Hamann (2006) demonstrated that people interpret information about others in ways that confirm their political leanings. During the 2004 presidential election in the USA, participants from both the Democrat and Republican 'sides' were shown multiple statements about the Democratic candidate John Kerry, the Republican candidate George W. Bush or a neutral public figure. Sometimes, these seemed to expose contradictions in what these politicians had said. For example, Mr Bush was reported as saying that Ken Lay, the CEO of Enron, was a great friend of his, but later, after the scandalous collapse of Enron, he denied knowing him. The researchers found that the contradictory information was evaluated differently depending on the pre-existing political leanings of the participants. Specifically, participants were much more likely to interpret statements as genuinely revealing a contradictory stance by the politician concerned if they were personally opposed to them. In this way, participants interpreted information in ways that confirmed their original beliefs. A further aspect of this study is that participants' evaluations were carried out while they were in an MRI scanner monitoring brain activity. As participants rated apparently contradictory statements about their preferred candidate (but not an opposing candidate), emotional centres in the brain were aroused. The authors concluded that their results capture an active, emotion-laden process of dealing with information that is contradictory to one's beliefs.

Projection

Projection The process whereby people attribute their own characteristics (e.g., attitudes, emotions) to others.

It is difficult to know what others are thinking or feeling, or to predict what they are going to do. One of the tricks we have up our sleeves is projection. **Projection** is the process by which we attribute our own characteristics (be they attitudes, emotions, habits or traits) to other people. This concept made its way into social psychology through the writings of Freud, who saw projection

as a defence mechanism – a way of denying that one has unwanted needs or desires by attributing them to other people. However, social psychologists do not use the term in this way any more. It is used as a way of solving a social cognitive problem – working out other people on the basis of limited information – rather than a way of denying one's own nature (e.g., Gollwitzer, Schwörer, Stern, Gollwitzer & Bargh, 2017; Toma, Yzerbyt, Corneille & Demoulin, 2017).

To illustrate, Douglas and Sutton (2011b) asked British undergraduates to evaluate 17 conspiracy theories, such as the theory that the Apollo moon landings were faked, or that Princess Diana was murdered. The more highly participants had earlier scored on a measure of the trait of Machiavellianism – an amoral willingness to exploit others – the more they were inclined to endorse these conspiracy theories (seeing them as true, plausible, coherent, interesting and worth considering). The relationship between Machiavellianism and endorsement of these conspiracy theories was mediated or driven by personal willingness to conspire. In short, Machiavellian participants were more likely to indicate that they would personally play a part in conspiracies such as the murder of Princess Diana, and, for this reason, were more likely to see conspiracy theories as believable. In their second study, Douglas and Sutton asked half their participants to recall a time when they had helped another person out. The intention was to make these participants feel a little more moral and thus less willing to conspire. As predicted, participants who recalled helping someone out were less willing to take part in conspiracies and, as a result, were less likely to find conspiracy theories to be true, plausible, coherent and so on.

Magical thinking

Magical thinking
Thinking based on non-rational assumptions about the ability of events to affect each other in ways that cannot be accounted for by the known laws of physics.

Research suggests that people are susceptible to what is known as **magical thinking** – thinking based on assumptions that are not rational, but are still compelling (Nemeroff & Rozin, 2018; Rozin & Nemeroff, 1990). For example, many hold the belief that when two objects touch each other, they pass on properties to each other (law of contagion). Also, many believe that objects that resemble each other share fundamental properties (law of similarity). Thinking about social events can, therefore, be susceptible to magical thinking. Rozin, Millman and Nemeroff (1986) demonstrated how people's behaviour is influenced by these laws of magical thinking – also known as *sympathetic magic*. For example, they showed that laundered shirts previously worn by a disliked person were less desirable than those previously worn by a neutral or liked person.

Also, as we saw in Chapter 2, people's need for control means that they sometimes see connections between events, even if these connections seem rather magical and unrealistic. Sometimes, these cognitions are related to person perception. For example, Pronin, Wegner, McCarthy and Rodriguez (2006) had participants perceive that they had harmed another person using a voodoo hex. The connection between the hex and the harm caused to the other person was seen as stronger if the participant had first been induced to harbour evil thoughts towards the victim. Thus, magical thinking and superstition play a part in how we view others and the social world.

THE NATURE OF SOCIAL COGNITION

As we have seen in this chapter, and also Chapter 2, there are plenty of reasons to doubt the view that people are always rational, conscious thinkers. In this section, we consider research showing that much of our social cognition seems to happen outside our conscious awareness. Second, much of our social cognition seems to happen outside the self altogether. Further, social cognition is not only done individually, but also collectively. It is therefore important to outline what is 'social' about social cognition.

Automatic versus controlled social cognition

Historically, people have been thought to be largely in control of their behaviour, making conscious decisions about what to do. But as we saw in Chapter 2, people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours are often influenced by factors they are unaware of (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), people erroneously think their behaviour is influenced by things that do not affect it (e.g, Leavitt & Christenfeld, 2011), and are prone to thinking they intentionally did things they didn't do (Wegner & Wheatley, 1999). Over the centuries, the importance of unconscious thoughts, feelings and decisions has been highlighted by religion and literature. Freud was the first to place the unconscious centre stage in psychology. Freud's ideas largely fell out of favour in experimental psychology and, with it, mainstream social psychology. However, since the 1970s, researchers have paid increasing attention to the aspects of people's mental and social lives that happen outside their awareness. Now, as we shall see throughout this book, many findings highlight the importance of the unconscious on our social lives – on topics as diverse as aggression, persuasion, intergroup relations and the environment.

A number of theories in social psychology have distinguished between *controlled processing* – thoughts, feelings and emotions we would describe as conscious in the traditional sense – and *automatic processing,* which we would not. There are four features that, together, define whether a psychological process is automatic or controlled:

1. Awareness: people are often unaware of stimuli that influence them. As we shall read below, people can be influenced by visual stimuli or subliminal primes on a screen, that is, those they did not consciously notice. In other instances, they may be aware of a stimulus, but unaware that it is influencing their behaviour (remember in Chapter 2 how Nisbett and Wilson's (1977) shoppers preferred items on the right of a display, but did not realize it).
2. Intention: some psychological processes may happen without us intending to start them. For example, studies have shown that sitting behind an impressive desk causes people to pursue power over others, without being aware of their goal (Chen, Lee-Chai & Bargh, 2001).
3. Controllability: some psychological processes are difficult for people to stop or prevent. Sometimes, this is simply because they are unaware of those processes. But in other cases, such as when they engage in unwanted stereotyping of other groups, people find it difficult to stop, as we shall see in Chapter 12 (Devine, 1989).
4. Efficiency: an automatic process does not require conscious attention, whereas a controlled process does. Think back to Gilbert and Osborne's (1989) study of the correspondence bias, encountered earlier in the chapter. People were prone to the bias only when under cognitive load – when their conscious attention was consumed by another task. When their attention was free to focus on forming an impression of stimulus persons, they were not prone to the bias. This suggested that the processes that led to the correspondence bias are automatic, and the processes that correct the bias are controlled.

Theories that distinguish between automatic and controlled processes are known as *dual process theories* (Strack & Deutsche, 2015). However, it is important to note that the distinction is not as sharp as you might think. Bargh (1994) described awareness, intention, controllability and efficiency as the four jointly sufficient conditions – or the four horsemen – of automaticity (see Figure 3.13). He also noted that there are few, if any, cases in which interesting social psychological

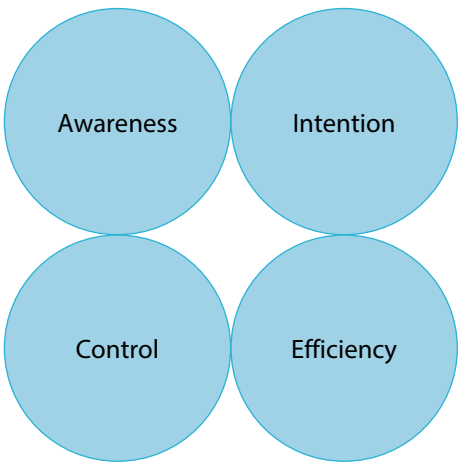

FIGURE 3.13 Bargh's (1994) four horsemen of automaticity When people are unaware of a psychological process, did not intend to start it, cannot control when they stop it and when the process is efficient, in the sense that it does not consume people's limited attentional resources, it can be said to be fully automatic. Most psychological processes of interest to social psychologists satisfy some, but not all, of these criteria, so can be said to have automatic and controlled features.

processes meet all four criteria for automaticity (see also Kahneman & Treisman, 1984). You may intend to form an impression of another person, for example, but be unaware of how you do it. Walking down the street is an efficient process, in the sense that it is so learned that you do not need to consciously think about it most of the time, but at the same time you can control it, that is, you can stop it if you want to. Likewise, habits often rely on unthinking action but breaking them require controlled processes (Wood, 2017). Thus, most psychological processes can be said to have both automatic and controlled features.

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Experimental control and replication

Studies using the technique of *priming* – activating associations in memory – have the potential to give social psychologists insight into how our thoughts can influence other thoughts, and even our behaviours. One well-known example is a study by Bargh, Chen and Burrows (1996), who asked participants to complete a sentence containing words such as 'retired', 'wrinkle' and 'sentimental'. After doing so, the experimenters observed participants walking down the corridor as they left the laboratory and found that those who had been primed with age-related words moved more slowly. In another study, Chen and Bargh (1997) presented photographed faces of Black men to White university students so quickly (13 ms) that the participants did not notice them. Later, these participants behaved in a more hostile way towards an interaction partner while playing a collaborative game. The rationale is that a 'Black men are hostile' stereotype, current in the USA, activated the concept of hostility and caused participants to behave in a hostile way. The classic studies by Bargh et al. (1996) produced some of the most widely cited and striking results in social psychology in recent decades.

However, relatively few direct replications of these results were published until Doyen et al. (2012) published two such studies. In their first study, which closely followed the method of the original study, they observed no effect. However, in their second study, they did observe the original effect – but only when the research assistant running the study was led to expect that participants would walk slower after being exposed to the elderly stereotype. Doyen et al. concluded that unconscious priming effects were likely to explain Bargh et al.'s original effects, but not in the way that Bargh et al. thought. Participants appeared to walk more slowly, because they had unconsciously been influenced by the expectations of the experimenter, *not* by the elderly prime. If Doyen et al. are right, the participants in their study (and perhaps Bargh et al.'s) were remarkably similar to Clever Hans – picking up on, and conforming to, subtle cues in the experimenter's behaviour. This is a classic case of a 'demand characteristic' in experimental social psychology (see Chapter 1). Further research is required to determine whether the original studies of Bargh et al. (1996) are replicable without such instructions to the experimenter, and, indeed, whether the findings of Doyen et al. (2012) are themselves replicable.

This points to a couple of problems inherent in mainstream social psychology. The first is that without careful experimental control, experimenters' biases may subtly influence the results of their research, even when they are setting out to collect data in a scrupulously honest and professional way. Researchers, like participants themselves, are prone to automatic social thought, emotion and behaviour that can influence their findings. More generally, in principle, there is always – or almost always – another way to explain a given finding than that put forward by the researchers who obtained it. The second problem is that biases in the publication process, combined with the way researchers use statistics to test their ideas, can lead to overconfidence in the results of published findings. As noted in Chapter 1, every finding could arise from chance alone – so, in principle, the results of Bargh et al.'s studies, like those of any other studies, could have been a 'fluke'.

In sciences like social psychology, researchers try to reduce the risk of making false conclusions by subjecting their results to *significance testing*, which determines how likely it is that a given result could have emerged by chance alone. Generally speaking, the results are seen as signifying a 'real' effect rather than a 'fluke' if $p < .05$; that is, if there is less than a 5 per cent (or 1 in 20) possibility that the results could have happened by chance. The problem is, run a study 20 times over, and even if there is no 'real effect', chances are you will observe a significant result, $p < .05$, at some point. In general, it is hard to publish 'null effects', where the difference between conditions or the relationship between variables is not statistically significant. One reason for this is that journals want to showcase new and eye-catching findings; another is that

null effects can be hard to interpret (was the idea wrong? Were the methods inappropriate?). Yet another reason is that when a finding has been shown to be significant before, a failed attempt to replicate that finding can be especially troubling and hard to understand, and so is less likely to be accepted by the scientific community. Thus, instead of seeing the light of day, these findings tend to languish, unpublished, in the 'file drawers' of researchers. This file-drawer problem is a major issue in sciences like social psychology that rely on significance testing. The more unpublished null effects there are, the less confident we can be in the published tip of the iceberg. The significant published effects need to be seen in the context of the number of studies that have failed to replicate them – and this number is generally unknown. The published effects are increasingly likely to have emerged either by chance or because of some unreported aspect of the way the original study was done; for example, Doyen et al.'s results suggest that the experimenter running the studies reported by Bargh et al. may not have been as 'blind' to conditions and hypotheses as was suggested by their written account of the methods.

Questions

1. The article by Doyen et al. (2012) is published in *PLOS ONE*, an online, open access journal. Use an Internet search engine to find and read it (it's brief). If you have access to the original article by Bargh et al. (1996), also read it. What differences in method do you see? How exact is the replication?
2. In Chapter 5 (Communication), when discussing nonverbal communication (e.g., the intended or unintended use of body language and intonation to convey information), we consider a similar case. Gilder and Heerey (2018) found that participants were affected by experimenters' beliefs about the primes they had been exposed to, and not by the primes themselves. You might want to read about that study, and the section on nonverbal communication. What nonverbal cues do you think experimenters might be giving to participants in order to influence their responses? Bear in mind that in the Doyen et al. (2012) and the Gilder and Heerey (2018) studies, experimenters had no particular motivation to 'cheat' – they probably were not deliberately influencing participants. How would you test for these effects? Understanding these effects is important not only to understand how social psychological experiments can go wrong, but it may also help us understand how our perceptions of others can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (see Chapters 9 and 11).

This distinction between automatic and controlled processes is often described using other terms – you will often read about implicit vs. explicit, conscious vs. conscious, or heuristic vs. systematic processes. For example, in Chapter 6, you will read about the heuristic-systematic model of persuasion, which separates the different social cognitive processes that occur when people encounter persuasive stimuli. On the one hand, there are the systematic (or controlled) processes that involve careful reasoning and close attention to information, and on the other, there are the heuristic processes where people do not consciously attend to information but use heuristics to process what they see (Chaiken, 1987; Chaiken, Liberman & Eagly, 1989). The notion of implicit and explicit processes runs throughout the study of social cognition as researchers attempt to understand what people can and cannot control about their thinking, feeling and acting.

The social nature of social cognition

What exactly is social about social cognition? Social cognition assumes that 'real- world' social issues and problems (e.g., prejudice) can be understood with respect to basic cognitive processes. Thus, the core topic of study for social cognition researchers is people, specifically how people think about themselves and other people. The discipline is therefore different from cognitive psychology, in that it focuses on how people see themselves within their social world, and not just how they perceive other 'things' such as inanimate objects. Understanding the 'social' in social cognition relies on the distinction between people and things. People perceive their

environment and are perceived by others within it. People intentionally interact and influence those around them. Crucially, much of social cognition is *shared*. For example, we read about stereotypes earlier in this chapter – generalizations about groups and the characteristics of members of groups – and these beliefs are shared among many people. The sharedness of social cognition makes it inherently social.

By applying cognitive psychology to social phenomena, social cognition offers a powerful way to understand such phenomena. However, one drawback is that early social cognition neglected many social and emotional aspects of social experiences and it therefore became isolated from other research being carried out in social psychology. Many critics of social cognition argued that it reduced complex social phenomena down to their most basic cognitive level and there was very little left that was truly social (Forgas, 1983; Markus & Zajonc, 1985; Moscovici, 1982; Zajonc, 1989). Markus and Zajonc (1985) went so far as to say that the restricted focus on cognition would be short-lived. It is true that social cognition has often dealt with social phenomena in a rather reductionist way, and recent developments in social neuroscience – the study of brain correlates of behaviour (see Chapter 1) – are even more reductionist. However, other areas of social cognition are much less reductionist and pay closer attention to the social context. For example, the way people think about and act towards social groups draws heavily on social cognitive theories such as social identity theory (Chapters 10 and 11). How and why people comply and conform demonstrates how thinking and behaviour is influenced by the social context (Chapter 9). Research on attitudes and persuasion shows how behaviour and individuals' attitudes are heavily influenced by social forces (Chapters 4 and 6). Social cognition also now pays closer attention to the emotions that people feel in social contexts (Chapter 4). These developments distinguish social cognition from cognitive psychology, and keep social cognition relevant to social psychology as a whole.

Researchers have been paying increasing attention to how social cognition is 'social', in the sense that it is done collaboratively, and not just by individuals (e.g., Holtgraves & Kashima, 2008; Smith & Collins, 2009; Sutton, 2010). This is the notion of *distributed social cognition*. You engage in distributed social cognition all the time, even if you're not aware of it. When you are talking about a party or family occasion and ask someone to remind you of the name of the person who said something embarrassing, you are engaging in distributed or 'collaborative' memory processes, where memories are not just in people's minds but distributed across a social network (Luhmann & Rajaram, 2015). When you are gossiping (Chapter 5), you are effectively engaging in collective person perception, working together to decide who's clever, trustworthy or to be avoided (Wu, Balliet & van Lange, 2015). Stereotypes, group norms and cultural beliefs are all outcomes of distributed social cognition that we will encounter several times throughout this book. To study social cognition does not entail a focus on the private mental processes of the individual mind.

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

The Student Project on page 654 by Geneviv Fanous from the University of New South Wales experimentally examined how people draw inferences about a person's level of aggression from very small pieces ('thin slices') of information, as we have discussed in this chapter. It is also relevant to the study of stereotyping (Chapter 4) and aggression (Chapter 13).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, we considered two key social processes in social cognition – causal attribution and person perception – and discussed various errors that social perceivers can make while engaging in these processes. We also discussed the nature of social cognition. Throughout this chapter,you will have learned that:

- Social cognition is the study of the cognitive underpinnings of social thought and behaviour.
- Causal attribution – the process of assigning a cause to an event – is an important social process that can contribute to feelings about the self and others. In many respects, people are rational and scientific in the way they explain events, but sometimes they are prone to bias, especially when lacking time, motivation or information. This can affect all aspects of their life, such as their emotional wellbeing, relationships and educational performance.
- Two well-known 'errors' in attribution are the correspondence bias (the tendency to attribute behaviours to stable, underlying personality traits without sufficient evidence) and the actor-observer bias (the tendency for actors to attribute their own behaviour to the situation and for observers to explain behaviours in terms of personality traits).
- Other biases and errors include the self-serving attribution bias (the tendency for people to attribute the causes of negative events to aspects that deflect blame from the self), self-serving biases (seeing the self as better than average), unrealistic optimism (viewing outcomes for the self as better than outcomes for others), the false consensus effect (the tendency to view one's own behaviours as more typical than they really are) and the false uniqueness effect (the tendency to see the self as more likely to perform positive behaviours and be less biased than others).
- The study of person perception (or impression formation) is the study of how people make judgements about others, and the information they use to make these judgements. Warmth is the most important dimension of person perception. It can be divided into sociability and morality, and distinguished from a person's competence.
- Asch's configural model suggests that we form a holistic impression of people that integrates a small number of important traits. These are known as central and peripheral traits. The algebraic model suggests that people assign positive and negative valence to various traits and combine them to make a general evaluation of a person. It is generally accepted that people use a weighted average of traits to make the impression, but some information (especially negative information) tends to be weighted more heavily.
- First impressions are quick, accurate and powerful. Factors influencing person perception include a person's physical appearance (especially their attractiveness). Sometimes, traits people observe first tend to be assigned the greatest importance (the primacy effect), but they often give more attention to information that is observed most recently (the recency effect).
- The notion of associative networks allows social psychologists to explain how they integrate and organize information about people into memory.
- Because we often lack the processing power to make perfect judgements, we often rely on heuristics, or rules of thumb, that enable us to make approximate judgements. Examples of such heuristics are the representative heuristic (people are placed into categories based on their resemblance to the category), the availability heuristic (where the likelihood of an event is based on how quickly knowledge or ideas come to mind) and the anchoring and adjustment heuristic (where inferences are influenced by initial knowledge or information).
- Other biases and errors in social cognition include the negativity bias (the tendency to add more weight to negative information), the hindsight bias (the tendency for people to exaggerate how much they could have predicted an outcome after it happened), the confirmation bias (the tendency for people

to notice information that confirms their beliefs and often ignore information that disconfirms them), projection (the attribution of our characteristics onto other people) and magical thinking (thinking based on non-rational assumptions). Emotions also strongly influence social cognition and behaviour.

- Much of our thinking and behaviour is influenced by events or observations of which we are not aware. Also, our thoughts are often influenced by our behaviours so that our cognition is 'embodied'.
- The 'social' in social cognition comes from the unique focus on how people think about themselves and other people. Social cognition may sometimes be too reductionist, but recent developments have attempted to reintroduce more of the 'social' in social cognition.

In this chapter, we have focused on how people understand the social world. In Chapter 4, we focus on how people judge and evaluate the social world. We discuss the core psychological topics of attitudes, emotions, social judgement and decision making.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. Describe and evaluate two different approaches to person perception.
2. How do people form first impressions and how accurate are they?
3. What is the hindsight bias, what causes it and what are some of its consequences?

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Applying social cognition to business problems

Imagine you are a consultant employed by businesses and charities to advise on how they can apply psychological theories and findings.

1. One of your clients is in the property business and relies heavily on the ability to negotiate excellent prices for the properties it buys. Find three findings in this chapter and explain to the client how they could be used to help them negotiate good prices (write no more than 600 words in total).
2. Another client is a charity which, unfortunately, lost a lot of money when it invested in a fund that subsequently collapsed. A major media outlet has published an exposé blaming the loss on the management of the charity, arguing that the charity could, and should, have avoided the loss. This publicity is potentially damaging to the charity, as it is likely to deter donors from giving their money. It wants you to help it in preparing a response to the story. In particular, it is interested in the psychological biases that may lead people to assign blame incorrectly. What errors and biases from this chapter might have contributed to the heaping of blame on the charity by the media outlet?
3. An investment bank finds that its traders are particularly prone to the confirmation bias – once they decide a trade is a good one, they tend to ignore evidence to the contrary. Using Internet search engines or databases, can you find how the confirmation bias can be counteracted, helping traders to make better and less risky trades?

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources including videos and self-test multiple choice questions to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

Augoustinos, M., Walker, I., & Donaghue, N. (2006). *Social cognition: An integrated introduction*. London: SAGE. Alternative approaches to the study of social cognition (e.g., social representations and discourse analysis) are integrated with mainstream social cognition in this comprehensive volume.

De Waal, F. (2016). *Are we smart enough to know how smart animals are*? New York: W. W. Norton & Co. This chapter has been almost exclusively concerned with how we explain people's behaviour and form impressions of them. Frans de Waal writes about animals' actual and perceived personalities and abilities.

Fiske, S.T., & Taylor, S.E. (2008). *Social cognition: From brains to culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill. Comprehensive and detailed book on social cognition, highlighting cutting-edge research in social neuropsychology, mainstream social cognition and cultural psychology.

Greifeneder, R., Bless, H. & Fiedler, K. (2017). *Social cognition: How individuals construct social reality*. London: Psychology Press. An up-to-date and coherent set of contributions from leading researchers in the field of social cognition.

Hilton, D.J. (2007). Causal explanation: From social perception to knowledge-based causal attribution. In A.W. Kruglanski & E.T. Higgins (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 232–53). New York: Guilford Press. Comprehensive review of the literature on social explanation and causal attribution.

Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Nobel Laureate and founder with Amos Tversky of the literature on heuristics and bias offers a popular and still essentially up-to-date account of the dual nature of thinking. It is both a bestseller and has been enormously influential across many academic disciplines.

Uleman, J.S., & Kressel, L.M. (2013). A brief history of theory and research on impression formation. In D.E. Carlston (Ed.), *Oxford handbook of social cognition* (pp. 53–73). New York: Oxford University Press. This chapter does what it says on the tin: it provides a scholarly history of how research in person and group perception has developed, tracing back to philosophers who thought about human character before social psychology existed.

Waldmann, M.R. (Ed.). (2017). *The Oxford handbook of causal reasoning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. This edited volume includes chapters from leading scholars, in fields such as cognitive psychology and neuroscience, on the cutting edge of how people explain events. It reflects how the study of causal explanation has moved from social psychology to those disciplines, and will suit you if you have a particular interest in them.

CHAPTER 4

THE SOCIAL JUDGE: ATTITUDES, EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIOUR

In this chapter, we begin by considering the nature of attitudes, values and ideologies. We then consider how and why attitudes form and change, and highlight different types of attitudes. Further, we consider the distinction between explicit and implicit attitudes and then turn our attention to the role of our bodies, and emotions, in our social judgements and behaviours. By the end of the chapter, you will have a clear understanding of the important roles played by attitudes and emotions in our daily social lives.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- What are attitudes?
- Attitude formation
- Implicit and explicit attitudes
- Attitudes and behaviour
- Cognitive dissonance
- Embodied social cognition
- Emotions and social judgement

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The poet E.E. Cummings wrote: 'Since feeling is first, who pays any attention to the syntax of things will never wholly kiss you.' This is an eloquent, if offbeat, statement of the importance of feeling, passion and preference in the lives of human beings. Chapters 2 and 3 were largely devoted to the study of the knowledge people have of themselves and others. This chapter is devoted to people's preferences, emotions and gut-level reactions. It is about how people *feel* about their social world, much more than what they *know* or believe about it. The study of preferences, in particular – or 'attitudes' as they are called in social psychology – is perhaps the most central topic in our discipline. Although most of this chapter is concerned with attitudes, we will encounter attitudes in every single chapter in this book. The study of attitudes has increasingly been supplemented by the study of emotions, and in recent years, the study of how not just our brains but the rest of our bodies are implicated in our attitudes and emotions. The poet, perhaps, would approve of the focus on feelings and, increasingly, emotions in social psychology. And he appeared to anticipate research into the role of our bodies in our feelings when, later in the same poem, he wrote: 'my blood approves,/and kisses are a better fate than wisdom.'

We begin this chapter by considering what attitudes are, and their relation to broader concepts such as values and ideologies. We then consider how and why we form attitudes, and what can cause our attitudes to change. Next, we outline different types of attitudes, in particular the important distinction between explicit and implicit attitudes – broadly speaking, those we can consciously articulate versus those we cannot. We then review recent work on the role of our bodies, and our emotions, in our social judgements and behaviours.

WHAT ARE ATTITUDES?

Attitudes are typically defined as a person's evaluations of various aspects of their social world (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Tesser, 1993; Tesser & Martin, 1996). People have attitudes concerning just about everything. For example, people hold attitudes about other people, groups of people, food, the weather, education, marriage, ideas, books, films – the list is endless. The thing an attitude is about can be described as an **attitude object**. In general, where an evaluation of an object, concept or otherwise can be formed, an attitude will emerge. Of course, such evaluations can vary in the extent to which they are favourable or unfavourable. For example, we may have a positive attitude towards one group of people but a negative attitude towards others. Another way of describing attitudes is that they are *preferences*. Seen this way, we can understand that attitudes are not exclusively possessed by human beings. However, human beings appear to be unique in the content of, and how they can reflect on and express, their attitudes. As Banaji and Heiphetz (2010) put it:

Attitudes People's evaluations of aspects of the social world.

Attitude object The thing an attitude is about.

> Bundles of preferences characterize every living organism; without them, plants would not turn toward the sun and cockroaches would not run away from it. In us, preferences exist not only in these built-in forms shared with other living beings but in distinctly human ways, such as the consciously molded attitudes we convey through artistic expression, the moral codes by which we judge our worth and failings, or the words we craft to describe imagined utopias. (p. 353)

EXPLORING FURTHER

Look up the dictionary definition of 'attitude' online. Apart from the psychological meaning of the word 'attitude', what other meaning does it have? This reveals that the psychological meaning of 'attitude' is another example of the use of metaphors borrowed from the physical sciences. Bear this in mind later in this chapter when we discuss embodied social cognition – the relationship between body and mind.

Attitudes are not always straightforwardly positive or negative – they can sometimes be mixed or ambivalent (e.g., Dalege et al., 2016; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Zayas & Shoda, 2015). For example, we might perceive chocolate cake to be both tasty and bad for us, so our attitudes are at once positive and negative. Attitude ambivalence is an important and wide-reaching concept in social psychology. As we saw in Chapter 2, many people are narcissistic, meaning they have **ambivalent attitudes** towards themselves – at once positive and negative – which can lead them to be defensive, constantly seek praise and validation from others, and react aggressively to criticism or rejection. As we shall see in Chapter 11, attitudes towards groups of people are also often ambivalent – women are stereotyped, for example, as both moral and refined and devious and competitive. These ambivalent attitudes can lead to patronizing benevolence (e.g., helping when no help is required) and out-and-out aggression. These are just two examples of how attitudes can have important emotional, behavioural and social consequences (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Petty & Krosnick, 1995).

Ambivalent attitudes Attitudes that are mixed, being both positive and negative.

Attitudes can be distinguished from other, related concepts in social psychology. **Values** are enduring, evaluative beliefs about general aspects of life that go beyond specific objects and situations (Maio, 2010; Rokeach, 1973). For instance, 'equality' and 'happiness' are examples of personal values that generally transcend specific events. Values are organized along a hierarchy from those that are most important to those that are least important to the self (Ball-Rokeach, Rockeach & Grube, 1984). Rokeach (1973) suggested that values are higher-order concepts than attitudes, and values that are particularly important to people influence and organize their attitudes. For instance, if a person strongly values health and fitness, this is likely to influence attitudes to various attitude objects such as exercise, diet and drinking alcohol. A person who has positive attitudes towards exercise, dietary restraint and drinking in moderation is more likely to engage in these behaviours (e.g., Homer & Kahle, 1988). Thus, a person's values can indirectly influence behaviour through their influence on attitudes (Boer & Fischer, 2013). In a similar fashion, knowing something about a person's values can help us predict their opinions about justice in the world (Feather, 1991). Bardi and Schwarz (2003) found that people's values (e.g., traditional values) were correlated with participants' self-reported behaviour (e.g., following traditions).

Values Enduring beliefs about important aspects of life that go beyond specific situations.

The study of values has revealed important cultural differences. Some cultures value conformity, whereas others value self-expression. Roughly, this corresponds to the individualism-collectivism dimension encountered in Chapter 2. Also, people from some cultures value tradition more strongly, whereas in other cultures, rational, secular, 'modern' ideas are more valued (Esmer & Petterson, 2007). These are important differences, with implications for whether cultures will adopt democratic systems of government. For example, countries with autocratic (non-democratic) governments tend to become democratic if their population endorses values that are more self-expressive, rational and secular than their current system of government would suggest (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). However, recent research has also revealed an apparent human universal – across cultures, there appear to be

EXPLORING FURTHER

Can you find which cultures highly value conformity and which highly value self-expression (individuality)? Try searching online for the 'World Values Survey'. This global research project publishes an excellent brochure online that summarizes its findings for a public audience, and locates different countries and regions of the world in terms of their values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2011). You might also want to find, and complete, the 21-item version of the Schwartz Values Survey online. This instrument is often used in cross-cultural studies of values and is probably the best example of how values are currently measured.

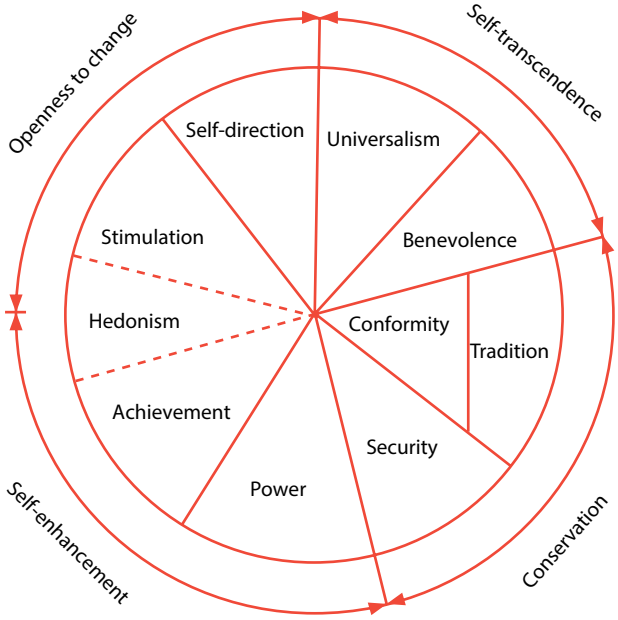

FIGURE 4.1 The Schwartz value circumplex (or 'wheel')
This model of values has been widely tested worldwide and seems to offer a model of how values are organized in all human societies. Values that are positively associated are close together on the circumplex (e.g., security and power). Thus, people who endorse one value strongly will also tend to endorse neighbouring values strongly. Conversely, values that are opposite to each other on the wheel are negatively associated (once participants' tendency to agree with all the values is controlled for). Thus, people who strongly endorse security tend not to endorse self-direction so strongly. Different segments of the wheel loosely correspond to overall orientations. For example, self-direction and stimulation correspond to openness to change, whereas achievement and power correspond to self-enhancement (the desire to achieve high status, even at the expense of others if necessary).

Source: Borg, Groenen, Jehn, Bilsky & Schwartz (2011). Used by permission from Journal of Personnel Psychology; *Vol. 10 (1), pp. 1–12 ©2011 Hogrefe Publishing www.hogrefe.com*

ten key values (see Figure 4.1). Further, although these are endorsed to varying degrees in different cultures, their relationship to each other is the same across cultures. In other words, values that are positively (or negatively) associated in one culture also tend to be positively (or negatively) associated in other cultures (Sagiv, Roccas, Cieciuch & Schwartz, 2017; Schwartz, 1992, 2011).

As well as being more general, values differ from attitudes in other ways. For example, people have often thought hard about their attitudes and have come to adopt attitudes after much consideration (Walton & Wilson, 2018). As we shall see in Chapter 6, attitude change following persuasion is often longer lasting and more profound when people have really thought about the arguments presented to them. However, people find it difficult to articulate the reasoning behind their values. People simply have the experience of holding certain values dear without always knowing why. Maio and Olson (1995) demonstrated this in a series of studies where they asked participants to think about the reasons why they hold certain values. Performing this task changed their values. If people already had well-thought-out reasons for their values, we would not expect them to change as a result of a few minutes' thought. Thus, Maio and Olson (1995) argued that values are 'truisms', or self-evident, and hardly worth mentioning (see also Bernard, Maio & Olson, 2003a, 2003b; Dentale, Vecchione, Gebauer & Barbaranelli, 2018; Maio, 2010).

Ideologies, like values, are more general than attitudes. Whereas values refer to the importance one attaches to various aspects of life, ideologies refer to an interrelated and widely shared set of beliefs that serve to explain social realities (Thompson, 1990). Ideologies typically refer to social, economic or political systems, and contain ideas that not only explain those systems but also suggest how they should be run (Jost, 2006). They can influence values, attitudes and intentions to commit behaviours (Crandall, 1994). For example, sexist ideology, as we shall see in Chapter 11, is a set of beliefs about the roles that men and women occupy, and should occupy, within society. It is associated with attitudes to any number of attitude objects, including rape survivors, career women, abortion, cosmetic surgery and women's lifestyle choices during pregnancy. Ideologies are important to people because they offer them a way to agree on an understanding of the world and what actions they should take (Jost, Ledgerwood & Hardin, 2008; Xu, Plaks & Peterson, 2016). But, they are often hotly contested – as in the battles between sexism and feminism, left-wing and right-wing ideology, and so-called 'fundamentalist' and secular ideology (Jost, 2006). For more insight

Ideologies
Interrelated and widely shared sets of beliefs that typically relate to social or political contexts.

into the importance of ideologies in everyday life, and their relation to attitudes, see the Social Psychology in the Real World box below on political conservatism (Chapters 11 and 14 also deal at length with ideologies).

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Political attitudes

The ideology of political conservatism (also known as right-wing political orientation) has been widely studied by social psychologists in the past few decades. Conservatism takes different forms in different countries, but two essential attitudes have been identified as characteristic of conservatism, wherever it is found (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski & Sulloway, 2003). One is a relatively positive attitude to income inequality. Conservatives 'consider people as inherently unequal and due unequal rewards' (Erikson, Luttberg & Tedin, 1988, p. 75). Another is a relatively negative attitude towards social change, as compared to tradition and the status quo. Attitudes, then, are fundamental to politics. What drives people to adopt this conservative cluster of attitudes? Generally speaking, the results of research into this question do not make for pleasant reading if you happen to be a conservative/right-winger (but may delight you if you are a liberal/left-winger). But they are worth reading because they reveal a good deal about where attitudes and ideologies come from and the purposes they serve.

One source of conservative ideology appears to be negative emotions, including anger, fear and anxiety (Kettle & Salerno, 2017). Those to the right of the political spectrum fear threat, loss and death more than those on the left (e.g., Jost, Federico & Napier, 2009; for a nuanced view, see Crawford, 2017). They also tend to see the world as a more dangerous place (Duckitt, 2001) and are more emotionally reactive (Mills et al., 2016; Tritt, Peterson, Page-Gould & Inzlicht, 2016). There is some evidence, perhaps because conservatives are more emotionally reactive, that they are less motivated to feel empathy for others – though this does not mean they actually experience less empathy (Hasson, Tamir, Brahms, Cohrs & Halperin, 2018). They are more 'closed-minded' – less tolerant of ambiguity and more inclined to prefer simple, straightforward, quickly obtained and apparently certain answers and explanations (de Zavala, Cislak & Wesolowska, 2010; Giacomantonio & Mannetti, 2018; Jost, Sterling & Stern, 2018). For this reason they are less attracted to poetry, travel and foreign films (Jost et al., 2003). The argument is that right-wing ideology relieves fear and anxiety by affirming the social order and hierarchy of the status quo (Banaji & Heiphetz, 2010; Jost et al., 2003).

Much of the research that paints this unflattering picture is correlational and therefore hard to interpret in causal terms. However, there is some longitudinal and experimental research that makes for even worse reading for conservatives. In analyses of data from national surveys of

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15,000 British citizens born either in 1958 or 1970, Hodson and Busseri (2012) found that children with lower IQs were more likely to grow up to be politically conservative. Partly for this reason, they also grew up to be more racist. Eidelman, Crandall, Goodman and Blanchar (2012) found other evidence that reduced capacity to engage in high-level thought also increases political conservatism. In one of their studies, they went into a bar, and found that the more drunk the bar patrons, the more right-wing their attitudes became. In subsequent experiments, the same authors found that placing participants under cognitive load or time pressure also made them more conservative. In a meta-analysis of 67 studies examining the relationship between political orientation and intellectual ability, Onraet et al. (2015) found that conservatism was associated with lower cognitive ability. This relationship was not strong; the overall correlation was –.20, indicating that intellectual ability explains up to 4 per cent of the variance in political orientation. This effect size is typical in social and personality psychology, but leaves plenty of room for smart conservatives and not-so-smart left-wingers. Further, Lewis and Bates (2018) found that while intelligent children are less likely to grow into *socially* conservative adults (e.g., preferring traditional gender roles and sexual conventions), they are more likely to be *economically* conservative when they grow up (e.g., preferring low taxes and government spending).

However, some upsides to political conservatism have been suggested. There is some evidence that they may feel happier (e.g., Napier & Jost, 2008) and experience more meaningful lives (Newman, Schwarz, Graham & Stone, in press) – though this may depend on the specific type of conservatism that people endorse (Choma, Busseri & Sadava,

2009; Duriez, Klimstra, Luyckx, Beyers & Soenens, 2012), and the way that happiness is measured (Wojcik, Hovasapian, Graham, Motyl & Ditto, 2015; for a meta-analysis of many studies, see Onraet, Van Hiel & Dhont, 2013). They are more conscientious, meaning that they are generally better organized, tidier and more goal-oriented (Sibley, Osborne & Duckitt, 2012). They may be more informed by moral principles, including principles that are of less interest to liberals, including loyalty, respect for authority and purity (Graham, Haidt & Nosek, 2009).

Questions

1. Can science tell us about the rights and wrongs of different political positions?
2. Most social psychologists, like most social scientists (Cardiff & Klein, 2005; Klein & Stern, 2005), identify as liberal/left wing. Few identify as conservative/right wing. A show of hands in a room full of roughly 1,000 researchers at the 2011 meeting of the society for Personality and Social Psychology – the world's leading annual meeting of social psychologists – uncovered some 800 liberals and 3 conservatives (Tierney, 2011). Do you think the tendency for research to be unflattering about political conservatism might stem from the biased representation of left-wingers/liberals in social psychology? For an extended and controversial review of this topic, see a feature article published in the journal *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* by Duarte et al. (2015), and the many open peer commentaries published below it.
3. The research on the relationship between political conservatism and happiness is correlational. Can you find any experimental evidence that political conservatism affects mood or wellbeing? If not, do you think it is possible to design such an experiment?

Thus far, we have seen that attitudes are essentially evaluations of specific objects and entities in people's social worlds. This definition, however, does not tell us much about an important aspect of what attitudes are, that is, how they are structured. Much research into attitudes has focused on this question of *structure* – what components attitudes have and how they are related. Up until the 1990s, this research was dominated by a **tripartite model of attitudes** (see Figure 4.2). In this model, attitudes are seen as having three facets (e.g., Breckler, 1984; Smith, Bruner & White, 1956):

Tripartite model of attitudes
A model of the structure of attitudes which assumed that attitudes have three components: affective (emotional), behavioural and cognitive (and is therefore sometimes known as the ABC model).

1. Cognitive: we can think about the positive and negative aspects of an attitude object.
2. Affective: we can feel positive or negative emotions towards an attitude object.
3. Behavioural: we can behave *favourably* towards an attitude object (typically by seeking it out or approaching it) or *unfavourably* (typically by avoiding it).

Thus, if you like dogs (in preference to, say, cats), you will probably think that dogs have positive attributes, for example they are playful, loyal and friendly. You will also have warm feelings towards dogs, and you will be more likely to choose to have a dog as a pet or interact with dogs you meet.

By and large, this tripartite view of attitudes has fallen out of favour (Banaji & Heiphetz, 2010; Dalege et al., 2016). Part of the reason for this is that since we are interested in the relationship between attitudes and behaviour, we want to study how people's behaviour is related to how they think and feel about attitude objects. We do not want to simply define their behaviour as an inherent part of their attitude (Zanna & Rempel, 1988). To take an example, let us say that someone believes in all the tenets of a major world

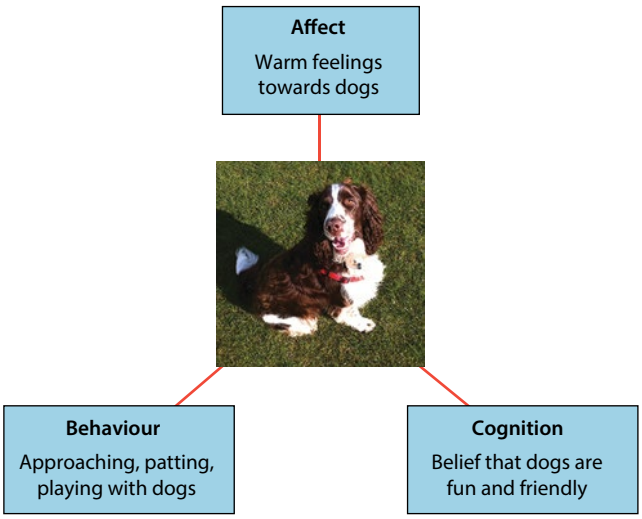

FIGURE 4.2 The tripartite (or ABC) model of attitudes
A stands for our affective or emotional reactions to an attitude object, B stands for our behavioural tendencies, especially approach or avoid, and C stands for our cognitions or beliefs about the attitude object.

religion, such as Islam, and associates positive emotions with that religion. However, they do not behave in accordance with their beliefs and emotions. Should we say they do not have very religious attitudes? It seems more accurate, instead, to say they do not behave in accordance with their attitudes. Indeed, behaving in ways that are discrepant with one's attitudes has interesting causes and effects in its own right, as we shall see throughout this chapter, for example when we read about cognitive dissonance.

Attitude complexity
The number of dimensions along which an attitude object is evaluated.

Other research has focused on **attitude complexity**. We can see attitudes as comprising sets of evaluative beliefs about an attitude object. Your attitude towards dogs can be *simple,* in that it is based on only a small number of aspects or *dimensions* of dogs, for example how sociable they are. Another person's attitudes may be more *complex,* for example they may think about other dimensions, such as the way they smell, the mess they make and the way they look. Specific evaluations of an attitude object can be *consistent*, that is, they may all have the same valence. For example, 'dogs look cute', 'they are friendly' and 'I like that doggy smell' are all positive. However, they may be evaluatively *inconsistent,* as in 'dogs are friendly', 'dogs look cute', but 'I hate the way they smell'. Complex and inconsistent attitudes may be especially likely to lead to a moderate position on a topic when people have thought actively about the inconsistency and attempted to integrate their various beliefs (e.g., 'dogs smell bad, but that is partly because they are so much fun and love to play outside') (Tetlock, 1984). This kind of integration of positive and negative beliefs is probably what we mean in everyday life when we say that someone has a 'balanced and considered view' on a topic.

ATTITUDE FORMATION

Since attitudes are such an important and wide-reaching aspect of social psychology, it is important to understand where they come from. If a person likes dogs, why do they like dogs? If a person has a positive attitude towards their country's leader, how did this attitude form? Does it even make sense to say that a person 'likes dogs', or are attitudes highly unstable across time and responsive to situational forces? Most social psychologists argue that attitudes are learned from others. However, some argue that attitudes come about due to mere exposure, while others argue for a genetic component to attitudes. We will discuss each approach in this section.

Why do we form attitudes?

Attitude function
The study of why people have attitudes.

Schema
A cognitive structure that represents information about a concept, its attributes and its relationship to other concepts.

Before we consider the details of *how* people form attitudes, it is useful to understand *why* they do so. The study of **attitude function** is the study of why we have attitudes. It is a special case of the study of motivated social cognition, which we encountered in Chapter 3. In a landmark paper, Katz (1960) defined four functions of attitudes:

1 The knowledge function: attitudes work as useful **schemas**, or mental guides, that help people make sense of many different kinds of information within a complex social world. Attitudes help us form opinions about factors related to the attitude object, so that thinking about the social world gets a little bit easier (Katz, 1960). Another way of looking at this is that attitudes perform a knowledge function that helps people focus on the important characteristics of an attitude object so that they know how best to deal with it quickly and effectively. Thus, it is important to people that they feel confident in the accuracy and legitimacy of their attitudes (although as we saw in the Social Psychology in the Real World box earlier, this need is stronger in some people than others). Also, it is important to people that attitudes appear to be consistent with

each other, so that they feel they are in possession of a coherent set of knowledge, beliefs and feelings about the world. This is one reason we are more likely to form attitudes that are consistent with our other attitudes (as we shall see in the coverage of balance theory and the APE model of attitudes later in this chapter). So, you will make choices more easily, quickly and with a greater sense of confidence if you feel your attitudes to alternatives (different jobs, different election candidates, different houses) are consistent and informed.

2 The utilitarian function: attitudes can help us obtain rewards and avoid punishments. If we have the socially 'correct' attitudes, others may look favourably on us. Thus, expressing attitudes can perform an impression management function (Chaiken, Giner-Sorolla & Chen, 1996; Cialdini, Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; Jellison & Arkin, 1977; Nienhuis, Manstead & Spears, 2001; Snyder & Swann, 1976). For example, some cultures frown on prejudice towards certain groups (e.g., blind people), but actively endorse prejudice towards certain other groups (e.g., pregnant women who drink alcohol) (Crandall, Eshleman & O'Brien, 2002). Shifts in the environment, such as the 2016 votes for Brexit in the UK and to elect Trump in the US, may make the expression of prejudice towards some groups more normatively acceptable (Crandall, Miller & White, 2018). Expressing positive attitudes to the right groups and negative attitudes to widely disliked groups is a way of affirming membership of the group, being valued and liked by others, and avoiding others' disapproval.

3 The value expressive function: attitudes may allow individuals to express their deep-seated values. If equality is an important value to you, there is a good chance you will be motivated not to harbour negative feelings and thoughts about disadvantaged social groups (Monteith, Ashburn-Nardo, Voils & Czopp, 2002). Attitudes that express values are often the most resistant to change (Hornsey, Harris & Fielding, 2018; Maio & Olson, 2000) and, as we shall see, are more likely to inspire commitment to attitude-consistent behaviours such as volunteering (e.g., Murray, Haddock & Zanna, 1996).

4 The ego defensive function: attitudes can protect us from psychological threats. As we saw in Chapter 2, having a positive attitude to ourselves – high self-esteem – appears to make us less anxious and defensive when confronted with the inevitability of our own death, which is perhaps the supreme psychological threat (Greenberg, Solomon & Pyszczynski, 1997).

We have seen how your attitudes can help you feel that you understand the world and your place in it, win friends and avoid making enemies, express your deepest values, and protect your psychological equilibrium from being disturbed by threatening facts and ideas. These functions of attitudes influence the attitudes we form. Now, we consider the specific psychological processes that affect attitude formation.

Mere exposure

Sometimes, simply being exposed repeatedly to a person or object can cause people to form more positive attitudes towards them. Zajonc (1968) termed this the **mere exposure effect**. In other words, merely being exposed to something often enough makes us like it. For example, you may see a particular cat on your way to university every day and develop a soft spot for that cat. You may watch a particular news programme on TV because your friends like to watch it and you are more likely to switch over to this programme in future. The mere exposure effect does not require a person to take any action towards the attitude object. For example, Zajonc (1968, 1970) found that people were more likely to say that familiar nonsense words or characters (ones they had been exposed to earlier in the experiment) meant something positive

Mere exposure effect The more exposure we have to a stimulus, the more we tend to like it.

(see Figure 4.3). Harmon-Jones and Allen (2001) found that people smiled more when they saw familiar faces rather than unfamiliar faces. As we will discuss in Chapter 7, the mere exposure effect is a strong determinant of the extent to which we are attracted to other people. The more we see them, the more we tend to develop positive attitudes towards them. The mere exposure effect even seems to influence voting for contestants in the Eurovision Song Contest (Abakoumkin, 2018; Verrier, 2012).

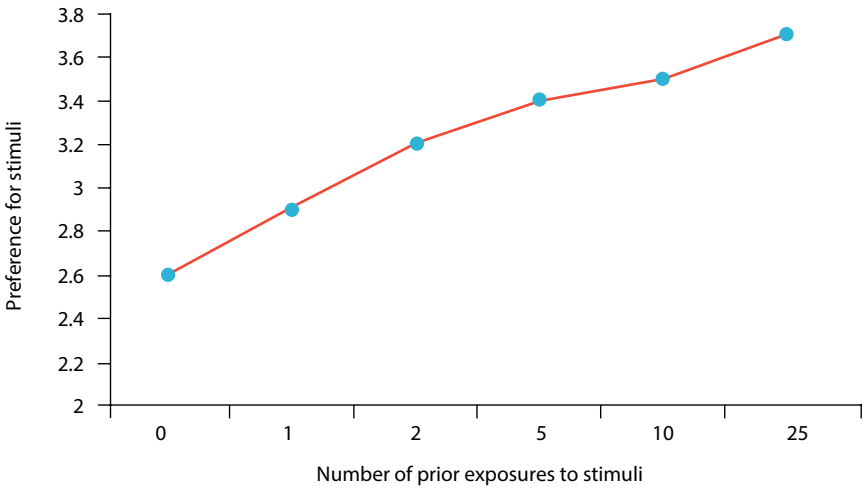

FIGURE 4.3 Mere exposure effect As participants were more exposed to a stimulus, in this case Chinese-like symbols, the more they evaluated them positively.

Source: Data from Zajonc (1968)

Eurovision aside, the mere exposure effect seems to say something startling and profound about the way our attitudes are formed. For Zajonc (1968, 1970), it suggested that 'preferences need no inferences', that is, we can form positive or negative attitudes without any thoughts about the object. Thus, the mere exposure effect provided an important, early line of evidence that attitudes and cognition are largely automatic and informed by factors that people are not aware of (Chapters 2 and 3).

Many studies have since been conducted on the mere exposure effect. Predictably enough, the picture painted by these studies is not quite as simple and elegant as the initial studies. For one thing, the mere exposure effect is not linear: liking for a stimulus does not simply increase with each added exposure. In fact, liking for a stimulus increases until a peak is reached, and then declines with successive exposure. This forms a so-called 'inverted U' shape (see Figure 4.4). Thus, the mere exposure effect works up to a point, beyond which the old adage that 'familiarity breeds contempt' appears to kick in (Montoya, Horton, Vevea, Citkowicz & Lauber, 2017).

Other factors also influence the strength of the mere exposure effect. In a major meta-analysis of the mere exposure effect, Bornstein (1989) found that it was larger in experiments where stimuli were presented only very briefly. In a subsequent set of experiments, Bornstein and D'Agostino (1992) presented stimuli such as photographs and geometric shapes either subliminally (5 ms exposures – just 1/200th of a second) or supraliminally (500 ms exposures – half a second). The mere exposure effect was more pronounced when shapes had earlier been presented subliminally. On the other hand, de Zilva, Vu, Newell, and Pearson (2013) found that stimuli presented outside conscious awareness did not elicit the mere exposure effect. Although it is easy to understand *why* the mere exposure effect might be advantageous to people (e.g., familiar people and objects are likely to be safer or at least more predictable), we still do not have a complete theoretical understanding of *how* it happens (Montoya et al., 2017).

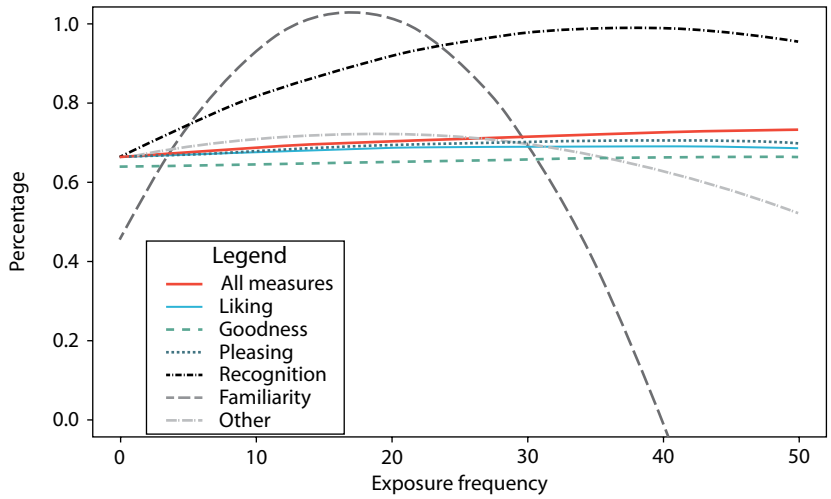

FIGURE 4.4 The effect of number of exposures on attitudes Montoya et al. aggregated the results from 81 published articles on the mere exposure effect and plotted the results in this graph. You can see that as the number of exposures to a stimulus increases from zero, judgements of familiarity and evaluative judgements (goodness, liking, etc.) increase. However, as the number of exposures increases further, the increase slows, and in some cases reverses. Most striking is the steep decline in familiarity: beyond a certain level of exposure, objects stop feeling more familiar, and actually start to feel less familiar – perhaps because they trigger lower levels of neural activiation. The findings show that mere exposure initially fosters positive attitudes, but eventually, more and more exposures cease to have this effect, and may even begin to reverse it. The reasons for this are not fully explained by any current theory.

Source: Montoya et al. (2017). Copyright © 2017 by American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

EXPLORING FURTHER

The mere exposure effect contradicts the proverbial wisdom that 'familiarity breeds contempt'. Why do you think familiar stimuli are liked more? In particular, can you think of an evolutionary explanation for this effect? In other words, what survival or reproductive advantage would be conferred on individuals if they prefer familiar to unfamiliar attitude objects? Can you think of a way to test your hypothesis? Read Bornstein (1989; also see Reber, Schwarz & Winkielman, 2004) for a discussion of the evolutionary basis of the mere exposure effect.

Social learning

Most social psychologists agree that our attitudes are largely learned from others. We observe others, we listen and we interact with them, and naturally we learn about their attitudes. Many of our own attitudes are acquired this way. It is argued that this **social learning** occurs through the following processes.

Social learning People acquire their attitudes (as well as behaviours) often from others.

Classical conditioning

This basic psychological process (also known as evaluative conditioning) can facilitate attitude formation. During a typical **classical conditioning** study, a stimulus (usually neutral to begin with) called the 'conditioned stimulus' is repeatedly paired with another stimulus (the 'unconditioned stimulus') that already evokes a positive or a negative reaction (the unconditioned response). For example, in Pavlov's ([1927]1960) initial investigations of canine digestion, the same laboratory technician would feed the dogs routinely. Naturally,

Classical conditioning Simple form of learning where a stimulus eventually evokes positive or negative reactions through repeated pairing with another stimulus.

the dogs would salivate (the unconditioned response) when food arrived (the unconditioned stimulus), but after a while, the dogs would salivate at the sight of the laboratory technician (the conditioned stimulus). They had come to associate the technician with the food so that, eventually, the presence of the technician alone was enough to elicit the natural response. Pavlov tried pairing a bell with the delivery of food and the same effect occurred. After a while, the dogs would salivate at the sound of the bell.

Although this may seem like a basic psychological effect with little relevance to attitudes, social psychologists argue that it is important in determining the formation of attitudes. In particular, if a stimulus is associated with an object that elicits a negative response, then a negative attitude to that stimulus may reasonably form. On the other hand, if a stimulus is associated with an object that elicits a positive response, then a positive attitude may emerge. For example, a child may observe that every time their parent sees a disabled person, they display negative nonverbal responses. The negative nonverbal responses make the child feel upset, but initially, exposure to disabled persons does not elicit a negative or positive response. However, with repeated exposure to the pairing of the neutral stimulus (disabled persons) with the negative stimulus (negative nonverbal behaviours), the child may come to associate disabled persons with feeling upset and develop a negative attitude towards them. This attitude has therefore been directly learned from the parent by the process of classical conditioning (see de Houwer, Thomas & Baeyens, 2001; Zanna, Kiesler & Pilkonis, 1970).

Subliminal conditioning
Classical conditioning that occurs outside the learner's conscious awareness.

There is evidence to suggest that this process more often than not occurs outside the awareness of the learner by a process known as **subliminal conditioning**. For example, Krosnick, Betz, Jussim and Lynn (1992) exposed student participants to photos of another person doing everyday things such as shopping for food. Prior to each photograph of this stimulus person, other photographs were presented very briefly (13 ms) – so briefly, in fact, they could not be consciously recognized. These photos were of highly pleasant or unpleasant stimuli (e.g., a couple on their wedding day, a pair of kittens and smiling friends playing rugby, versus a bloody shark, a face on fire and a bucket of snakes). The dependent variable was the participants' feelings towards the original person in the photos. Findings revealed that participants who had seen the positive photos paired with the person felt more positively towards the person than those who had been exposed to a negative pairing (Figure 4.5).

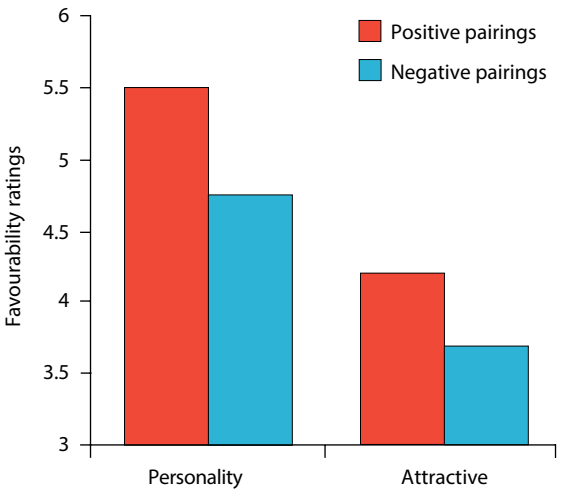

FIGURE 4.5 Subliminal conditioning The person paired with positive photographs was rated as having a better personality, and as more physically attractive, than the person paired with negative photographs. These results happened even when the positive and negative photographs were presented too briefly to be consciously noticed.

Source: Data from Krosnick et al. (1992)

Just as happened in research on the mere exposure effect, scholars have suggested that attitude learning occurs independent of conscious awareness (e.g., Walther, 2002), but have been increasingly contradicted by recent research findings (for a review, see Corneille & Stahl, 2018). For example, some studies suggest that evaluative conditioning effects were wiped out when participants were placed under cognitive load, and so did not have conscious resources free to pay attention to the stimuli they were being exposed to (DeDonder, Corneille, Yzerbyt & Kuppens, 2010; Mierop, Hütter & Corneille, 2017). Further, an experiment by Gast and Rothermund (2011) suggests that evaluative conditioning is stronger when participants are instructed to pay attention to how positive or negative the stimuli are. Thus, paying attention to stimuli pairings, and in particular whether they are desirable or undesirable, seems to allow associative learning to happen more strongly. This suggests that conscious thought must have an influence on evaluative conditioning.

Thus far, findings are mixed on a final, important issue regarding the extent to which evaluative conditioning happens as a result of automatic or controlled processes. This concerns the role of conscious awareness that the attitude object is being systematically paired with negative or positive stimuli. Some findings suggest that awareness of this contingency enables people to *correct* the tendency to like objects paired with positive stimuli, and dislike objects paired with negative stimuli (Walther & Nagengast, 2006). Others suggest that a degree of awareness of the contingency between the attitude object and other stimuli is actually necessary for evaluative conditioning (Bar-Anan, de Houwer & Nosek, 2010). Thus, we still do not know for sure whether evaluative conditioning depends partly on an inference (e.g., 'this object is associated with other positive things, so I like it', rather like 'any friend of yours is a friend of mine'), or whether it happens automatically and is actually corrected (e.g., 'I have some positive feelings for this object, but this is only because it is paired with other positive things') (Hu, Gawronski & Balas, 2017).

Whatever the precise mechanism that underpins evaluative conditioning, researchers are now widely using these learning paradigms. Exposure to repeated pairings of self-related stimuli to positive stimuli in the laboratory has been shown to have the potential to increase self-esteem (Baccus, Baldwin & Packer, 2004; Ebert, Steffens, von Stulpnagel & Jelenec, 2009; Grumm, Nestler & Collani, 2009; but for contrary findings see Fleming & Burns, 2017; Versluis, Verkuil & Brosschot, 2018); as well as reduce the liking for chocolate (Ebert et al., 2009) and the craving for alcohol (Houben, Schoenmakers & Wiers, 2010). Olson and Fazio (2006) also managed to reduce racial prejudice among White participants by pairing White faces with negative stimuli and Black faces with positive stimuli.

Instrumental conditioning

Being praised for doing or saying something is also a good way to learn. For example, your friends might praise your taste in wine so that the next time you are asked for your opinions about wine by other people, you are likely to articulate the response that was received favourably by others. This is an example of the process called **instrumental conditioning** – when a behaviour is followed immediately by a positive outcome, it is reinforced and more likely to be repeated. On the other hand, when a negative response follows a behaviour, it is weakened or suppressed and is therefore less likely to be repeated. Like classical conditioning, the principle of instrumental conditioning can also be applied to attitudes. For example, if a child makes a statement that is followed by smiles and laughter from a parent, this positive response makes it more likely that the child will repeat the statement in future, in order to receive the same positive outcome. There is some evidence to suggest that adults' attitudes can be reinforced by positive feedback. For example, Insko (1965) showed that participants' responses to an attitude survey were influenced by positive feedback on the responses they gave a week earlier. In summary, reinforcing one's attitudes with positive feedback means that the attitudes are more likely to survive and be expressed on other occasions.

Instrumental conditioning
A form of learning whereby a behaviour followed by a positive response is more likely to be repeated.

Observational learning

We also learn by simply observing others (Bandura, 1977), and this is another way in which people can form attitudes. For example, a child may overhear conversations between grownups or watch how they behave in specific situations. The child will often take on the information and it will influence the attitudes they develop. Similarly, observing people's behaviour on TV and in other forms of mass media can influence attitudes. There is some evidence to suggest that **observational learning** forms a significant role in attitude development. For example, children may learn attitudes towards intimate partner violence (domestic violence) from observation, and take these attitudes into their adult relationships (Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2015). Children

Observational learning
Individuals' attitudes (and behaviours) are influenced by observing others.

may also express derogatory attitudes about particular ethnic groups that they know very little about – meaning that these attitudes must have been learned by listening to or observing others (Aboud, 2005; Allport, 1954; Paolini, Harris & Griffin, 2016). Weisbuch, Pauker and Ambady (2009) found that characters in popular US television shows exhibited more negative facial expressions and body language to Black, versus White, characters (even when Black and White characters' social status was matched). Participants in their study viewed scenes in which this bias was evident. Although they did not consciously notice the bias, they were influenced by it, as demonstrated by more prejudiced attitudes on the Implicit Association Test, a measure to which we will return later in this chapter (see also Chapter 11). Observational learning can influence attitudes towards unfamiliar social groups. Findings show that people take on others' attitudes about groups when they do not have any experience or knowledge about the group themselves (e.g., Maio, Esses & Bell, 1994). This influence may be even stronger if, through the process of social comparison, we want our attitudes to be similar to those of others we admire. In Chapters 9 and 14, we return to the influence of group norms on our attitudes.

Innate factors

There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that genetic factors also play a role in attitude development. Unlike the social learning approach, this approach suggests that important features of attitude development occur because they are inherited (Arvey, Bouchard, Segal & Abraham, 1989; Keller, Bouchard, Arvey, Segal, & Dawis, 1992; Olson, Vernon, Harris & Jang, 2001). Much of this research centres around studies of identical and non-identical twins. As you may know (see also Chapters 2 and 13), identical (monozygotic) twins have exactly the same genetic makeup. In contrast, non-identical (dizygotic) twins, while having comparable life experiences, do not share the same amount of genetic material. Thus, if, on average, attitudes of identical twins are more strongly related than attitudes of non-identical twins, this is some evidence to suggest that attitudes can be inherited (see Figure 4.6). Indeed, findings show that these relationships are stronger for identical twins, for attitude objects as diverse as big parties, playing chess, roller coaster rides, abortion, the death penalty and capitalism (Olson et al., 2001).

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FIGURE 4.6 Genetic factors in attitude formation Playing chess is just one of the attitude objects towards which identical twins tend, more strongly, to have the same attitudes than non-identical twins (Olson et al., 2001).

Although diverse, these attitudes – towards novelty, risk and political beliefs – tend to be organized by political conservatism, as we saw earlier in this chapter. Political conservatism also seems to be heritable. Bouchard et al. (2003) found that conservative social attitudes are shared more strongly by monozygotic than dizygotic twins. This study focused on twins who were reared apart. In this case, similarities in upbringing cannot easily account for similarities in attitudes (Martin et al., 1986; Waller, Kojetin, Bouchard, Lykken & Tellegen, 1990). This is not to say that genetics accounts for all (or even most) of our attitude formation. On the contrary, evidence suggests that genetic effects are fairly small. Other research suggests that genetic factors do not strongly determine attitudes (e.g., Rozin & Millman, 1987; see also Chapter 13 for a critical evaluation of twin studies). However, it is intriguing to learn that the way we think, in addition to physical factors such as height and hair colour, appears to be influenced by our genetic makeup.

There is also some evidence to suggest that attitudes that are determined more by genetics are also more difficult to change (Crelia & Tesser, 1996), more important to people (Olson et al., 2001) and more likely to determine their behaviour (Crelia & Tesser, 1996; D'Onofrio, Eaves, Murrelle, Maes & Spilka, 1999). Some researchers argue that these fascinating genetic effects are probably determined by general dispositions to be 'positive' or 'negative', which in turn influence how people evaluate aspects of the social world (e.g., George, 1990). Others have found that the tendency to inherit political attitudes may be explained by differences in inherited cognitive ability and cognitive style (Ksiazkiewicz, Ludeke & Krueger, 2016; Oskarsson et al., 2015). Further research is required to determine whether the apparent heritability of political conservatism really means that our genes influence our political orientation per se, or instead affects general psychological traits like intelligence or optimism, which in turn shape the way we see the world.

EXPLORING FURTHER

The recent research into the heritability of attitudes is reminiscent of controversial research in the 20th century into the heritability of intelligence, which was used to suggest that some 'races' are inherently more intelligent than others. It is hard to see how the new wave of research on the heritability of attitudes could ever be used to support dubious theories of racial superiority. But, in a critical review, Feldman and Ramachandran (2018) argue that this new wave of research is making some of the same conceptual and statistical mistakes as the old wave. For readers who are comfortable with statistics, we recommend their paper. Their core argument is that the statistics used in these papers assume that genetic and environmental factors each make a simple, linear contribution to observed (phenotypical) traits such as attitudes. But in reality, a host of environmental factors work together, in complex interactions, to influence phenotypes. Modelling these environmental influences in a simple, linear way surely underestimates their contribution to people's attitudes, and therefore exaggerates the apparent contribution of our genes.

Attitude consistency and balance

As we have seen, attitudes have a knowledge function, and so people prefer to have harmonious, consistent thoughts and feelings towards the people and objects in their lives. Heider (1958b), the influential social psychologist who founded attribution theory (Chapter 3), described this basic principle of harmony and consistency in terms of Gestalt psychology. When attitudes are consistent with each other, they are in a state of *balance* and form a coherent whole or *unit*. If we have a positive attitude to one object, we tend to form positive attitudes to other objects it is positively related to. The simplest and most cited example is in interpersonal relations and can be summed up with the proverbs, 'any friend of yours is a friend of mine' (when spoken

to a friend), and 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'. Heider (1958b) asked his readers to imagine triads, involving two people and some attitude object (which might be another person). The attitude relation between each of the elements in the triad can be positive or negative. Let us say that you are opposed to the death penalty, but in discussions with one of your friends, it turns out that they are strongly in favour of it. In this case, your liking of your friend, their liking of the death penalty and your loathing of the death penalty form an *unbalanced triad* (see Figure 4.7). A likely response to this unbalanced triad is to change attitudes. Shocked to discover your friend's attitudes, you may now like them less. Alternatively, you may be motivated to listen carefully to your friend's opinion and revise your opinion on the death penalty. If you were to change your mind on the death penalty, your attitudes would then be balanced, and together, form a coherent unit – a *balanced triad*. Heider's (1958b) triads have an elegant property. They are balanced if multiplying the signs returns a positive value. Thus, three positive attitudes, or two negative attitudes and one positive attitude within a triad mean that attitudes are balanced. One negative attitude, or three negative attitudes, mean that they are unbalanced.

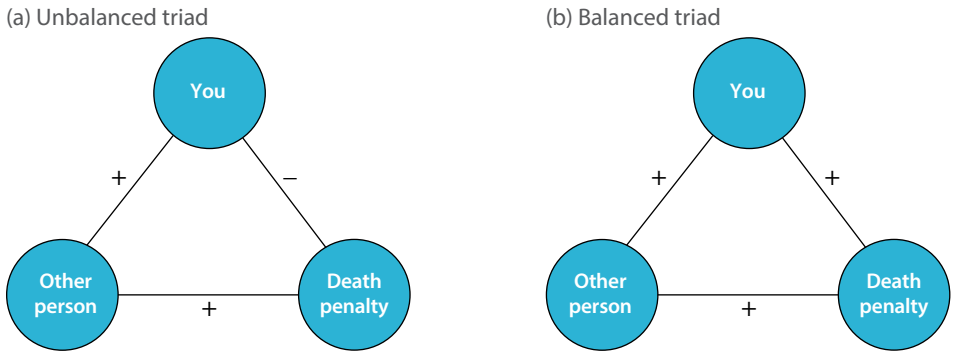

FIGURE 4.7 An unbalanced and a balanced triad In the unbalanced triad (a), you like another person and dislike the death penalty. The other person likes the death penalty. Since the multiplied signs are negative (there is one negative relation and two positive relations), the triad is not balanced, and the attitude relations do not form a coherent unit. When aware of this lack of balance, people tend to revise their attitudes. For example, they may revise your opinion of the death penalty. If you come to approve of the death penalty, a balanced triad (b) is formed.

Many studies investigated Heider's (1958a) balance theory in the context of such triads and broadly supported it (e.g., Curry & Emerson, 1970; Insko, Songer & McGarvey, 1974; Monsour, Betty & Kurzweil, 1993; Newcomb, 1961; for a review, see Crandall, Silvia, N'Gbala, Tsang & Dawson, 2007). As predicted, attitudes are more likely to change if they are unbalanced. Balance theory also helps to predict attitude formation. Thus, if your friend, rather than someone you cannot stand, likes a film or performer you have not heard of, your initial attitude to that new attitude object is more likely to be positive, too. Balance theory continues to be influential in many areas of social psychology and related fields, including child development, marketing and group processes (e.g., Brusco & Steinley, 2010; Hopkins-Doyle, Sutton, Douglas & Calogero, 2019; Hummon & Doreian, 2003; Woodside & Chebat, 2001). It stands as the first model to consider the importance of the consistency of attitudes, which, as we saw earlier, is important to their knowledge function. Balance theory also brought attention to the social aspects of attitudes. It established that, over time, we tend to share the attitudes of people close to us. For example, this basic principle has been developed by researchers working on shared reality (Figure 4.8). In close relationships, typically within social groups, people often work together to achieve a self-consciously shared set of attitudes to the world (Baumeister, Maranges & Vohs, 2018; Echterhoff, Higgins & Levine, 2009; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Jost, van der Linden, Panagopoulos & Hardin, 2018; Rossignac-Milon & Higgins, 2018; see Chapter 5 for more about the social construction of a shared reality through communication). This sense that 'we see things the same way' or 'we are on the same page' is exactly in keeping with Heider's (1958a) balance theory.

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FIGURE 4.8 Applause as a 'shared reality' As members of an applauding audience, we communicate to each other that we share a positive attitude to the speaker's message (Harwood, Scholmerich & Schulze, 2000).

Social representations: the social formation of attitudes

The broad principle established by balance theory is that attitudes are not formed in a social vacuum. Our attitudes are influenced by other people and are often formed socially. **Social representations theory** (Moscovici, 1963, 1983, 1988; Sammut, Andreouli, Gaskell & Valsiner, 2015; for recent reviews, see Batel & Castro, 2018; Potter, 2019) suggests that beliefs about the world – including evaluative beliefs, or attitudes - are built up by groups of people through processes of social interaction. Moscovici drew on Durkheim's ([1912]2001) notion of 'collective representation' – societally shared beliefs and attitudes – but abandoned the term 'collective' because he wanted to capture the notion that different representations of the same topic may be held by different sections of a society, or even by the same individual, at different points in time. Thus, in a study by Liu and Hilton (2005), Maori (indigenous) and Pakeha (ethnically European descendants of settlers) were found to have different social representations of New Zealand history. Notably, Pakeha had a generally negative view of their ancestors' behaviour during colonization, but to a lesser extent than Maori. Social representations are important because our attitudes are informed by our group and cultural memberships and are built up by social and cultural practices (discussions, media portrayals, art and science). They also may explain how we form attitudes to attitude objects that are outside the realm of our social experience. Thus, people living in overwhelmingly indigenous areas of their own country often harbour negative views of immigrant groups with whom they may have little or no contact, although social representations theory is not the only way to explain this (see, for example, Berg, 2009, and also Chapters 11 and 12 on intergroup contact).

Social representations theory Theory that beliefs about the social world are formed through processes of social interaction.

Social representations theory has attracted many criticisms. One pithy critique came from Potter and Litton (1985), who described it as 'a concept in search of a theory' (p. 82). What they meant is that although the theory provides the appealing central concept of social representations, it does not offer a precise account of how social representations form, or how they affect other social psychological processes. As we saw in Chapter 1, one of the main jobs of theories in social psychology is to identify and explain causal relationships so that we can understand how and why social phenomena happen. Other criticisms of the theory attack the central concept itself, describing it as too vague and all-encompassing (Billig, 1988; Jahoda, 1988). Although Moscovici has offered definitions of social representations, it is not always clear what counts

as a social representation, and ambiguity surrounds whether a social representation refers to the process by which people arrive at a common set of concepts, or the set of concepts itself (Wagner, 1998).

Defenders of social representations theory have responded to such criticisms with points that are both reassuring and worrying. Reassuringly, they point out that the relationship between social psychological phenomena is intimate and complicated, and we should not always expect to find simple or definitive accounts of social psychological phenomena (Markova, 2000; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005). Worryingly, they appear to use the complexity of social psychological phenomena to resist the pressure to provide clear definitions of concepts in the theory. Thus, talking about the phenomena of interest to social representations theory, Markova (2000) wrote that 'attempts to provide an exhaustive definition of such phenomena are based on a misconception of their nature' (p. 430). Voelklein and Howarth (2001) suggest that 'Moscovici is keen not to apply a definition that is too restrictive as complex social phenomena cannot be reduced to simple propositions' (p. 437). This reluctance to define terms precisely – in other words, the trend towards 'mysticism' – is worrying because any kind of academic enquiry needs to be clear and explicit. However, if we are prepared to suspend these worries, it is clear that social representations theory has inspired much research. This research has cast light on a range of topics, including how people collaborate to form attitudes to their history and national identity (Liu & Hilton, 2005; Kadianaki & Andreouli, 2017; O'Dwyer, Lyons & Cohrs, 2016; Sibley, Liu, Duckitt & Khan, 2008;), political conflicts (Elcheroth, Doise & Reicher, 2011), political ideology (Corbetta, Cavazza & Roccato, 2009; Wang, 2017), technology (Bertoldo, Mays, Poumadère, Schneider & Svendsen, 2016), disease (Idoiaga Mondragon, Gil deMontes & Valencie, 2017) and the environment (Batel & Devine-Wright, 2015; Castro, 2006).

EXPLORING FURTHER

A special issue of the journal *Political Psychology* in 2011 contained articles devoted to social representations theory. If you have access to this journal (some articles may be available to public readers on the Internet), browse through the articles to get a sense of how the theory has developed. Some of the articles (e.g., Elcheroth et al., 2011) spend time explicitly defining and developing the theory. Do you think that social representations theory is now on a firmer scientific footing, offering clearer definitions and accounts of causal processes?

IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT ATTITUDES

In Chapter 3, we encountered the important distinction between automatic and controlled social cognition. As we saw, we have more conscious awareness of, and control over, some aspects of our social cognition than others. Attitudes are no exception. A great deal of research has uncovered that far from having one attitude to an object we can consciously report, we have a mixture of unconscious (or implicit) and conscious (or explicit) attitudes. To understand this distinction, it is first necessary to have some idea of how attitudes are measured in social psychology. Thus, before exploring the different causes and functions of implicit and explicit attitudes, we briefly consider how attitudes are measured in social psychology.

Direct measures of attitudes

Attitudes are difficult to examine because, unlike many physical objects, they cannot be observed. Thus, social psychologists often rely on people's own self-reports of their attitudes. The most common approach to doing this is simply to ask people to respond to questions about their attitudes, that is, ask them what they think. For example, you may have participated

in a phone survey where a person asked you for your opinions about electronic goods, food, drink or something else. You may have completed a political opinion poll. In such cases, your attitudes are being measured. In studies of people's attitudes, social psychologists make use of **attitude scales**, a series of questions designed to measure specific attitudes. These scales are tested many times to ensure they are valid and reliable. A well-designed scale will measure the direction and strength of a person's attitudes on a particular topic (Dawes & Smith, 1985; Edwards, 1983; Likert, [1932]1974). For example, if you were asked to complete a scale concerning your attitudes surrounding popular conspiracy theories, you may be asked to rate your agreement with a set of statements, on a scale like this (from Douglas & Sutton, 2008; also Wood, Douglas & Sutton, 2012):

Attitude scale A series of questions designed to gauge a person's attitudes on a topic.

Princess Diana was murdered by rogue cells within MI6

Completely disagree Completely agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Your averaged responses reveal whether or not you endorse conspiracy theories, and how much you endorse such theories. Measuring attitudes in this way is relatively easy and noninvasive, so it is not surprising this is the most popular way in which social psychologists tend to measure attitudes. However, social psychologists also observe people's behaviours in order to judge their attitudes. For example, a researcher may measure whether people volunteer to stuff envelopes for a campaign or give money to a charity in order to assess their attitudes towards the cause, or how those attitudes change in response to contextual changes (Deci, 1975; Jonas, Schimel, Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 2002; Kashif, Sarifuddin & Hassan, 2015; Wilson & Dunn, 1986). Observational studies are sometimes used in organizational psychology to observe workers' attitudes (Schwarzwald, Koslowsky & Shalit, 1992), and in health psychology, for example in studies of older adults' perceptions of ageing (Warmoth, Tarrant, Abraham & Lang, 2016). Observing what people do is therefore a good technique for understanding their attitudes in a range of settings.

There are many advantages to these sorts of measures. In the case of attitude scales especially, the expense is relatively small and it is quick and easy to gauge people's attitudes. On the other hand, there are some drawbacks. Most importantly, these methods rely on people being honest. Much of the time, people will say what they think and behave in ways that reflect their attitudes, so scale and observational methods can be effective. However, when topics are sensitive and people feel embarrassed or afraid to say what they really think, self-report and observational measures may be less effective measures of people's actual attitudes. Social desirability is a powerful motivator, so sometimes researchers need to think of other ways to measure people's 'less desirable' attitudes.

One way to do this is to include a *lie scale* in the mix of the attitude scales of interest (e.g., Barrett & Eysenck, 1992; Feldman, Lian, Kosinski & Stillwell, 2017; Reynolds & Richmond, 1979). Such scales were originally introduced into personality measures in order to detect whether people 'fake good' on scores of other scales, to make themselves look more socially desirable (O'Donovan, 1969). Lie scales are made up of items listing behaviours and issues that are either socially desirable but not frequently practised (e.g., 'I am always nice to everyone'), or frequently practised but socially undesirable (e.g., 'I never say things I shouldn't'). From participants' responses, lying can be diagnosed when a set of desirable but infrequently performed behaviours are endorsed by the participant as being done frequently, and when frequently performed undesirable behaviours are denied by the participant. These responses can be statistically analysed alongside the attitude measures to compensate for social desirability concerns in attitude research. For example, in one study, Sutton and Farrall (2005) used a lie scale to demonstrate that men's attitudes towards crime (and specifically their fear of crime) were more marked than those of women, once lying was taken into account. The higher men scored on a lie scale, the less fear of crime they reported. Taking this bias into account helps explain why men report lower fear of crime, even though they are more at risk of violent crime (generally at the hands of other men) than women.

It is also possible to get around people's desire to look good simply by making their responses anonymous, so that their responses are not identifiable and they are not accountable for the views they express. However, social psychologists have also designed more indirect ways of examining attitudes that get around people's social desirability concerns. Some examples are discussed in the following section.

Indirect measures of attitudes

One such indirect measure is called the *bogus pipeline procedure* (Myers, 2016). Here, the participant is attached to a device known as the bogus pipeline, and told it can detect their 'true' attitudes (Jones & Sigall, 1971; Quigley-Fernandez & Tedeschi, 1978; Roese & Jamieson, 1993). This is presumed to cause participants to fear that dishonest responses would be noticed, causing them to indicate their attitudes more honestly than usual. This technique has been used widely in areas such as the detection of substance abuse in teenagers (e.g., Murray & Perry, 1987), alcohol abuse among pregnant women (Lowe, Windsor, Adams et al., 1986), self-esteem in children (Thomaes, Brummelman & Sedikides, 2017), distorted thinking that supports offending among child molesters (Gannon, 2006) and socially sensitive behaviours in surveys (Tourangeau, Rips & Rasinski, 2000; for a 20-year meta-analysis of bogus pipeline research examining studies up until the early 1990s, see Roese & Jamieson, 1993).

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Social psychologists have also devised physiological measures to examine people's attitudes. For example, Cacioppo, Petty, Losch and Kim (1986) devised a measure that monitors muscular movements in the face to examine the direction and intensity of attitudes. The muscular movements are measured electronically through a process called electromyography (EMG), which specifically measures the electrical activity of the muscles. Facial EMG allows researchers to examine subtle facial movements that may not be visible to the naked eye, by tracking electrical activation in muscles responsible for expressions such as smiling and frowning. Researchers have used facial EMG to discover that emotionally sensitive people's faces subtly respond to the emotions expressed by others (Künecke, Hildrebrandt, Recio, Sommer & Wilhelm, 2014), subtly smile with Schadenfreude when witnessing members of competitive, high status groups take a fall (Cikara & Fiske, 2012; 2013), and that cognitive dissonance, about which we shall learn more later in this chapter, is not immediately experienced as negative (Martinie, Olive, Milland, Joule & Capa, 2013).

In recent years, advances in neuroscience have afforded researchers another way to measure attitudes – to observe the brain's responses to attitude objects. This is not a straightforward process. Attitudes are defined as evaluations or appraisals, and so are rather abstract concepts that may not translate into any particular psychological mechanism. If they do not, attempts to observe them in the brain may be misplaced (Amodio & Harmon-Jones, 2012). Nonetheless, researchers have had success in capturing neural correlates of at least some aspects of attitudes, including attitudes to risk (Blankenstein, Peper, Crone & van Duijvenvoorde, 2017), fairness (Dulebohn et al., 2016), food (Muñoz-Leiva & Gómez-Carmona, 2019), infidelity (Ueda, Yanagisawa, Ashida & Abe, 2017), sexually objectified women (Cogoni, Carnaghi & Silani, 2018; Vezich, Gunter & Lieberman, 2017) and other stigmatized social groups (Krendl, 2016, 2018).

One approach to this is to use event-related potentials (ERPs), which can be observed using electroencephalogram equipment. As we saw in Chapter 1, this approach is particularly well suited to capturing rapid, short-term neural responses to stimuli. Crites and Cacioppo (1996) observed exaggerated P300 responses (associated with attention, arousal and updating of beliefs) in response to attitude objects that participants disliked. Cunningham, Espinet, DeYoung and Zelazo (2005) found that stimulus concepts rated as 'bad' (e.g., murder, terrorism, immigration) triggered these P300 responses in the right hemisphere of the brain, whereas objects rated as 'good' (e.g., love, babies, technology) triggered the same responses in the left hemisphere. These findings suggest the intriguing possibility that, to some extent, the brain hemispheres are specialized for positive and negative attitudes.

Another approach is functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), a 'brainmapping' technique that tracks which regions of the brain are being activated by monitoring changes in blood flow. In keeping with Amodio and Harmon-Jones's (2012) observation that attitudes are not psychological processes, many brain regions are activated in response to negative and positive attitude objects (Cunningham, Raye & Johnson, 2004). The amygdala, which is strongly associated with emotion, is activated when positively evaluated stimuli are presented (Zald, 2003), and still more strongly in the presence of negatively evaluated stimuli (LeDoux, 2000). According to a review of animal and human data (Bickart, Dickerson & Barrett, 2014), the amygdala appears to be the 'hub' of three brain networks linking different social cognitive processes: social perception, affiliation and aversion. This review is part of a trend in social neuroscience to look beyond localization of social cognition in a specific area of the brain, and consider how multiple areas of the brain are engaged at once (Han, 2018).

According to both fMRI and ERP evidence, racial prejudice is one phenomenon that seems to involve multiple brain regions working together (e.g., Ibanez, Haye, Gonzalez Rial, Hurtado & Henriquez. 2009). An interesting finding to emerge from this line of research is that neural responses associated with error recognition and cognitive control appear very quickly in response to other-race faces. This suggests that the inhibition of racial prejudice may be engrained in the brain and may occur even in the absence of a conscious effort to control the bias (Amodio et al., 2004). On the other hand, several brain studies have shown that neural signatures of empathy are reduced or absent when people are presented with faces of people from different racial backgrounds than themselves (Han, 2018). Prejudice, therefore, may involve not only responses that have to be inhibited, but a lack of positive responses such as empathy – suggesting that increasing inhibition and control is not enough to eliminate prejudice.

A huge limitation on the practical use of fMRI is its cost. If your currency is pounds, euros, or US, Australian, Canadian or New Zealand dollars, an fMRI scanner will cost over a million to purchase, and hundreds per hour to run experiments in. The experiments are also time-consuming to set up and conduct. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, for most social pscyhologists to access fMRI technology, especially in less wealthy areas of the world. A recently devised, much lowercost technique to obtain still relatively precise indications of

localization in the brain is functional near infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS: Ferrari & Quaresima, 2012; Scholkmann et al., 2014). This technique tracks the movement of blood in the brain, making use of the fact that the scalp and skull are somewhat transparent to light in the infrared spectrum. As a result, it can at present only be used to measure activity in relatively shallow areas of the brain, largely the cortical areas. A paper by Burns et al. (2019) demonstrates the successful use of fNIRS in a Middle Eastern (Jordanian) sample. Their results show that activity in the dorsomedial and ventromedial prefrontal cortex predicted how persuaded Jordanian participants were by health and safety videos (see Figure 4.9). This result echoes fMRI results with American students.

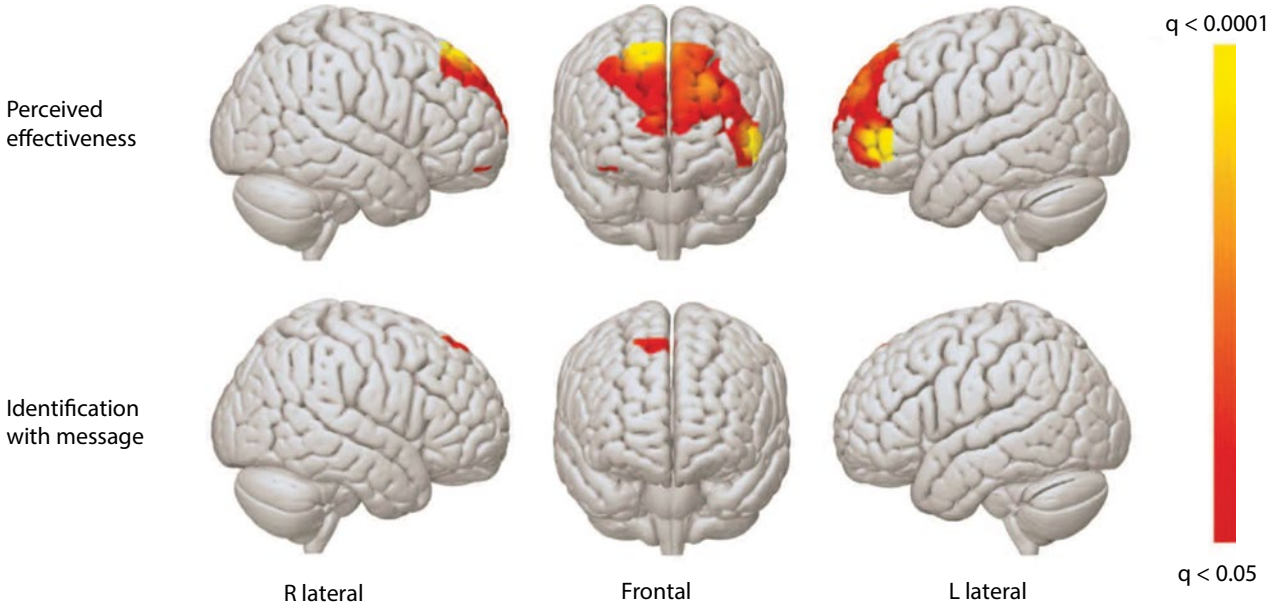


FIGURE 4.9 Brain activation patterns associated with evaluations of health and safety videos Using the relatively low-cost fNIRS technique of brain imaging, Burns and colleagues were able to capture brain activation patterns that were associated with Jordanian participants' evaluations of health and safety videos. In the top row, you can see brain activation patterns associated with the perceived effectiveness of health and safety behaviours advocated in the videos. In the lower row, you can see those associated with how much participants identified with the message – that is, how relevant they thought it was to them personally. Research has shown that identification with messages is an important ingredient in behaviour change.

Source: Burns et al. (2019). Copyright © 2019 by American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

EXPLORING FURTHER

We recommend reading the paper by Burns et al. (2019) that demonstrates the successful use of fNIRS in a Jordanian sample. Although not in itself necessarily a landmark finding, it establishes the validity of the technique, and points the way to new opportunities in low-cost and cross-cultural social neuroscience research.

Implicit Association Test (IAT) Reaction time test that measures the strengths of automatic associations between mental representations of objects (concepts) in memory.

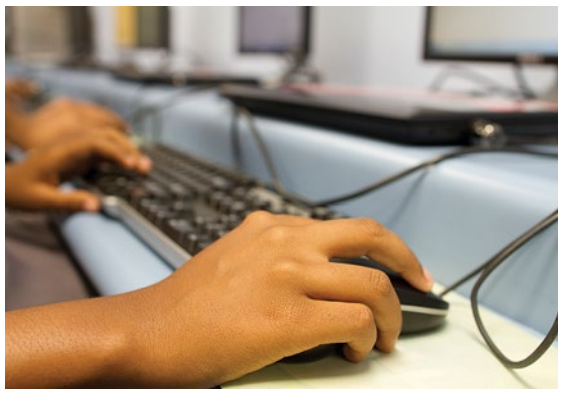
Although the use of neuroscience to assess attitudes is still arguably in its infancy, there has been a lot of research on the use of performance measures to assess attitudes. Performance measures borrow from the techniques and concepts of cognitive psychology, and assess reaction time and accuracy of responding on computerized tasks (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2011). The two most commonly used performance measures of attitude have been the go/no-go association task or GNAT (Nosek & Banaji, 2001), and the **Implicit Association Test (IAT)** (Greenwald, McGhee & Schwartz, 1998). Of these two, the IAT is used most often, and is featured below in the Ethics and Research Methods box.

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

The Implicit Association Test (IAT)

Participants in an IAT study typically sit behind a computer and are asked to press different keys to match concepts during a series of trials. For example, in the first block of trials, participants may be asked to tap a key on the left-hand side of the keyboard if they see a word they associate with 'good' and the right-hand key when they see a word that is associated with 'bad.' They do so for a series of words and their reaction time is measured. In the second block, participants may be asked to perform a similar task but this time matching two different concepts. For example, they may be asked to tap left when they see a word they associate with 'me' and right when they see a word associated with 'them'. Again, their reaction time is measured. The third block gets a little more complicated. Here, participants may be asked to tap left when they see a word associated with either 'me' or 'good' and right when they see a word associated with either 'them' or 'bad'. Their reaction times are again recorded by the experimenter. Finally, in the fourth block, participants may be asked to tap left when they see a word associated with either 'me' or 'bad' and right when they see a word associated with either 'them' or 'good'. In which block would you expect participants to be slowest? Research suggests that participants are typically slowest to respond in the final block. Before reading on, think why this might happen. Why do you think participants are slowest on the trials when they are asked to respond when they see words associated with 'me' and 'bad' or 'them' and 'good'?

Greenwald et al. (1998) argue that the IAT tests people's automatic preference for some classes of stimuli over others. It is based on the idea that attitudes are associative mental networks, and that associations are stronger if an attitude exists than when it does not. So, people will be able to more quickly link concepts that are related (for them) than those that are not. Thus, in the example above, 'me' or 'good' responses should be faster than 'me' or 'bad' responses – after all, people tend not to think of themselves as bad, so the association between 'me' and 'bad' should be less accessible. On the other hand, 'them' and 'bad' associations are typically stronger, so people are often faster at responding to this pairing. To give another example, if a student dislikes university lecturers, they will be likely to respond 'yes' more quickly to words like 'nasty' (when paired with university lecturers), and 'no' to words like 'nice'. Many studies have used the IAT to examine implicit attitudes towards racial groups (e.g., McConnell &



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Liebold, 2001), gender attitudes (e.g., Greenwald, Nosek & Banaji, 2003) and homosexuality (e.g., Steffens & Buchner, 2003; see Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann & Banaji, 2009 for a review). The popularity of the IAT even led to the publication of a tongue-in-cheek suggestion that since there are no people left alive who have not done the IAT, dead people should be exhumed and asked to do it (Bones & Johnson, 2007).

As well as satire, the IAT has attracted many serious criticisms. For example, some researchers have shown that responses to the IAT – said to be a measure of the extent to which a person endorses evaluative associations – do not correlate very well with other, more explicit attitude measures (e.g., Karpinski & Hilton, 2001). Perhaps, therefore, the IAT may be a better measure of the associations a person has been exposed to rather than the extent to which they endorse the associations themselves. However, this criticism may miss the basic point of dual attitude theories, in that implicit attitudes are supposed to be different from explicit attitudes (e.g., Bagenstos, 2007; Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2011; Rydell, McConnell & Mackie, 2008). Further, though the correlation is weak, it is statistically reliable (Greenwald et al., 2009). It is also large enough to have meaningful real-world consequences: Greenwald, Banaji and Nosek (2015) calculate that reducing the implicit racial bias of New York police officers by one standard deviation would result in thousands fewer arbitrary stop and searches of Black civilians (for a different opinion on the effect sizes in the IAT, see Oswald, Mitchell, Blanton, Jaccard & Tetlock, 2015).

In our view, another criticism may also miss the point of the IAT, even though it inspired useful research on the relationship between the IAT and real-world behavioural outcomes. Specifically, Blanton, Jaccard, Strauts, Mitchell,

and Tetlock (2015) review the results of many studies that have included both IAT and behavioural responses such as racial discrimination in hiring decisions. Consistently, they found that a 'neutral' score of 0 on the IAT does not correspond to neutral behaviour. In fact, participants who score 0 on the IAT tend to favour a racial outgroup over ingroup members. Participants whose IAT scores indicate a small implicit bias against a racial outgroup are neutral in behavioural measures, displaying no favour towards or against their own racial group. Blanton et al. (2015) argue that this suggests the IAT is miscalibrated: it shows bias when there is none. However, another way to interpret this gap between overt prejudice and IAT scores is precisely in line with theories of prejudice and the rationale of the IAT and other measures. That is, people's behaviour is controlled; they may refuse to act according to their implicit biases, because they reject prejudice or fear that others might (Devine, 1989).

On this note, another, perhaps more serious problem is that although the IAT is designed to circumvent the problem of socially desirable responding, with practice, people can fake it (Röhner & Ewers, 2016; Steffens, 2004). Finally, other social psychologists have criticized the IAT on a number of dimensions, such as the viability of the underlying assumption that prejudice really is made up of mental associations, and the difficulties in interpreting IAT scores (Fiedler, Messner & Bluemke, 2006; Mitchell & Tetlock, 2006). Nevertheless, the popularity of the IAT as a measure of implicit attitudes is remarkable. As of August 2019, the original article (Greenwald et al., 1998) had been cited 11,383 times in articles on Google Scholar. For a recent, sympathetic review of the IAT, see Jost (2018).

Questions

1. Research on implicit prejudice inevitably has political repercussions. For example, some scholars have argued that the ubiquity of implicit prejudice uncovered by the IAT and similar measures highlights the need for affirmative action programmes in employment. Since unconscious bias against minority groups is everywhere, the argument goes, a deliberate bias towards them needs to be introduced to counteract it (Jolls & Sunstein, 2006; Kang & Banaji, 2006). It has also been seriously argued that as part of recruitment and hiring processes, employers should consider running applicants for jobs through the IAT (e.g., Ayres, 2001). What are the arguments for and against the use of the IAT in hiring decisions – is it legitimate not to hire someone because they come out as prejudiced on the IAT? Consider the ethical, scientific and logistical arguments for and against the use of this technology.
2. Use Google Scholar to find the article by Greenwald, McGhee and Schwartz (1998). How many times has it been cited now?
3. Read the article by Nosek and Banaji (2001) on the GNAT. Then find some summaries of the GNAT and arguments for and against its use (as opposed to, say, the IAT). For example, one paper by Znanewitz, Braun, Hensel, Altobelli, and Hattke (2018) reviews different measures of implicit attitudes; a chapter by Gawronski and Hahn (2019) provides another useful comparative review. Which, if any, is the better measure? Are better measures becoming available?
4. Yen, Durrheim, and Tafarodi (2018) published a fascinating discourse analysis of what happens when people are confronted with the IAT, and discover that they do (or do not) show implicit prejudice. Access this paper, and compare the critical reactions to the IAT to the kinds of criticisms that academic researchers have levelled at it (see especially Jost, 2018, for a review of these criticisms and defences of the IAT). This highlights the skills that laypeople can have in criticizing scientific research methods – when they are sufficiently motivated (Lord, Ross & Lepper, 1979; Rutjens, Heine, Sutton & van Harreveld, 2018).

EXPLORING FURTHER

See what you think about the IAT. You can try it yourself at Harvard University's Project Implicit website (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/).

The relationship between explicit and implicit attitudes

Implicit and explicit attitudes tend, for the most part, to be positively correlated (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2011; Wilson, Lindsey & Schooler, 2002). For example, your attitudes to your best friends are likely (for the most part) to be positive whether they are measured on a self-report scale, or with a reaction time performance measure like the IAT, or using physiological and neuroscientific measures. Nonetheless, they differ in many interesting ways (Rydell et al., 2008; Wilson, Lindsey & Schooler, 2002), which are displayed in Table 4.1. Broadly speaking, it is harder for people to deliberately change their own or others' implicit attitudes, as compared to their explicit attitudes, through appeals to logic and the other normal techniques of persuasion (e.g., Petty, Tormala, Brinol & Jarvis, 2006). However, implicit attitudes to new attitude objects may be formed more quickly than explicit ones. You may display a subtle negative or positive bias towards a person or group, for example, before you can report any negative thoughts or feelings towards them (Ashburn-Nardo, Voils & Monteith, 2001; Gregg, Seibt & Banaji, 2006). Although implicit attitudes are slower to change, they can be highly dependent on the situation. For example, given the widespread prejudice felt towards Roma Gypsies around Europe, a typical European might find negative appraisals like 'dishonest' quickly activated when they see a Gypsy in a shopping centre, but at the same time, positive appraisals like 'musical' at a folk festival (for a demonstration of the same logic with attitudes to Black people in the USA, see Barden, Maddux, Petty & Brewer, 2004).

As we have seen, implicit attitudes are more likely to be socially or personally unacceptable than explicit attitudes (Degner & Wentura, 2008; Rudman & Kilianski, 2000), because people are reluctant to admit to others (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007), or themselves (von Hippel & Trivers, 2011), that they possess them. Another key difference is that implicit attitudes are more likely than explicit attitudes to influence our unplanned, spontaneous behaviours. For example, Dovidio, Kawakami and Gaertner (2002) found that implicit racial bias, as measured by the IAT, more strongly affected negative body language during interactions across racial boundaries. In another study by Hofmann and Friese (2008), female German university students with positive implicit attitudes to sweets were more likely to eat sweets in the laboratory, independent of their explicit attitudes. The effect of implicit attitudes was heightened when the students had consumed alcohol, suggesting that implicit attitudes are more likely to influence our behaviours

TABLE 4.1 Differences between implicit and explicit attitudes

	Implicit attitudes	Explicit attitudes
How do they change?	Classical or associative conditioning (also known as evaluative conditioning)	As well as conditioning, explicit attitudes are affected by logic and evidence
How quickly do they change?	Implicit attitudes change slowly, but very different implicit attitudes can be temporarily activated by situations	Explicit attitudes can change quickly, but are somewhat less prone to strong temporary changes in a given situation
How much knowledge do they require?	Implicit attitudes can be almost instantly formed with little or no knowledge of an attitude object	Explicit attitudes are typically moderate or weak until people learn salient facts about an attitude object
How much do they conform to society's standards or norms?	Implicit attitudes do not necessarily respect society's standards or norms. However, if people internalize society's standards, they can condition their own implicit attitudes over time	Explicit attitudes are often strongly shaped by society's standards or norms. People are typically reluctant to express socially undesirable social attitudes, especially when they are accountable
What kind of behaviour do they primarily affect?	Spontaneous, unplanned behaviour such as body language	Planned decision making
What mental processes underlie them?	Associative processes	Propositional processes

when we are unable to devote controlled cognitive processes to 'stop them' from working on us. Implicit attitudes towards food emerge in childhood (Monnery-Patris, Marty, Bayer, Nicklaus & Chamberon, 2016) and continue, through adulthood, to affect eating behaviour (Trendel & Werle, 2016).

Why are implicit and explicit attitudes different from each other? Probably the most influential current theoretical account of the implicit-explicit duality is Gawronski and Bodenhausen's (2006, 2007, 2011, 2014) **associative-propositional evaluation (APE) model**. According to this model, implicit and explicit attitudes are the behavioural outcomes of separate mental processes. Implicit attitudes spring from *associative processes,* such as evaluative conditioning. Associative processes can also be triggered by similarities between the stimulus and something in memory.

Associative-propositional evaluation (APE) model
Model asserting that implicit and explicit attitudes are the behavioural outcomes of separate mental processes.

Ever found yourself liking (or disliking) someone partly because they remind you of someone you used to know? This phenomenon was first noticed by Freud, who called it *transference,* and it is one of Freud's ideas to receive empirical support (e.g., Andersen, Reznik & Manzella, 1996). When these associations are activated in memory, an implicit evaluation will follow. On the other hand, the APE model holds that explicit attitudes spring from *propositional processes.* These are akin to beliefs or conclusions, and are defined as the validation of information that is implied by activated associations. Thus, for example, you might have a positive implicit attitude to a person simply because they have been paired with, or are similar to, another person who you value. This positive attitude might show up in an IAT, for example, or in some other indirect test of reaction time or accuracy. However, your implicit positive attitude may not necessarily lead you to draw the propositional conclusion that they really are a nice or attractive person. Whether you do so will depend partly on whether you think this conclusion is logically warranted, given what you know about them.

The APE model is relatively new, but evidence already suggests that it predicts and explains effects that are both interesting and useful. For example, consider two ways of reducing prejudiced attitudes towards disadvantaged outgroups – an important topic in social psychology, to which we return at great length in Chapter 12. One approach is to negate stereotypes (e.g., to practise repeatedly saying 'Gypsies are not thieves'). Another is to affirm counter-stereotypes (e.g., to repeatedly say 'Gypsies are honest'). Both techniques may work to reduce explicit prejudice – after doing this for long enough, people are less likely to endorse prejudiced statements about Gypsies, since they are reminding themselves that many Gypsies are honest, that it is not warranted to label an entire group as thieves and so on. However, one technique is likely to have disastrous effects on implicit prejudice towards Gypsies. Which one, do you think? Since implicit attitudes are built up by associative processes including evaluative conditioning, the negation task has a cruelly ironic effect. It repeatedly pairs 'Gypsies' and 'thieves', so that in the very act of trying not to be prejudiced, a person who repeatedly says 'Gypsies are not thieves' is actually training their associative mental systems to produce an even stronger negative emotional reaction to Gypsies. Much the same logic, in relation to racial prejudice in the USA, was demonstrated in an experiment by Gawronski, Deutsch, Mbrikou, Seibt & Strack (2008) (see Figure 4.10).

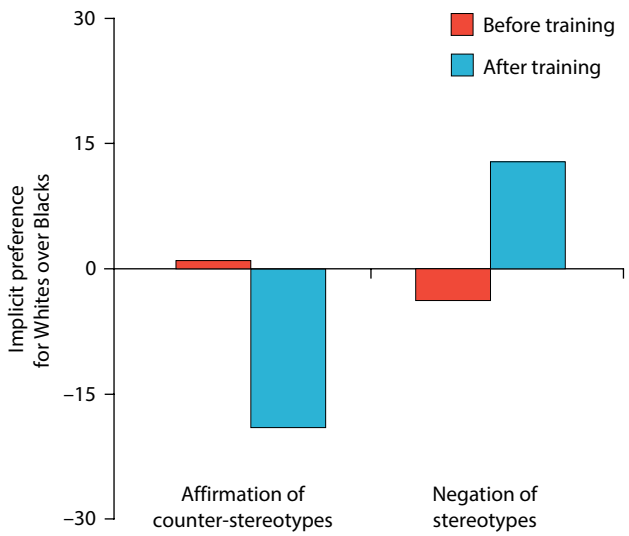

FIGURE 4.10 Effects of affirming versus negating stereotypes In an experiment by Gawronski et al. (2008), implicit racial bias was reduced when participants practised affirming counter-stereotypes (saying positive statements about an outgroup). However, it was increased when participants practised negating stereotypes (denying negative statements about an outgroup). This shows how prejudice reduction techniques can backfire if they are not informed by sound theory and evidence.

Source: Data from Gawronski et al. (2008)

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

Attitudes are important to people. But to what extent do attitudes predict what people do? This question has occupied social psychologists for many years, and is central to the practical significance of attitudes. For example, are attitudes towards minority groups important if they have little effect on how people treat members of minority groups or influence what people say about them? The link between attitudes and behaviours is, therefore, an important issue to study. In a classic study, LaPiere (1934) demonstrated that attitudes do not necessarily determine what people do. At the time the study was conducted, psychologists generally agreed that attitudes were predispositions to behave in a certain manner (Allport, 1924), so they assumed that attitudes would be closely related to behaviour.

LaPiere investigated if this link would exist in the study of prejudiced attitudes. Over the course of two years, he travelled around the USA with a young Chinese couple. In doing so, he stopped at 184 restaurants and 66 hotels. At all these establishments (with the exception of one), the Chinese couple were served courteously and politely. However, after this study, LaPiere contacted each establishment and asked the proprietors if they would serve Chinese clientele. Overwhelmingly, the business owners said that they would not serve Chinese visitors; out of 128 businesses that responded, a staggering 92 per cent said they would not. Thus, LaPiere's demonstration suggests that attitudes do not always predict people's behaviour. A more modern example might be how people respond to 'political correctness'. Negative attitudes have not necessarily disappeared, instead people monitor their behaviour so that it becomes more socially acceptable. Attitudes do not, therefore, always predict what people do.

Other research points to a tenuous link between attitudes and behaviours. For example, Wicker (1969) noted that the correlation between the two – based on a comparison between responses to questionnaires and actual behaviours – is typically lower than 0.3. Considering that a perfect correlation is 1.0, this represents only a low or moderate effect size. These findings call into question the validity of questionnaire methods that examine people's attitudes. If there is little link between people's attitudes and what they actually do, perhaps social psychologists are focusing too much time on a construct that means very little to social reality. From your own experience, you will probably be able to think of many instances where your attitudes do not match your behaviour. For example, you might think that your best friend's taste in music is awful but you do not tell them this because you do not want to jeopardize the friendship. Instead, you say nothing or compliment your friend's taste in music and so your attitude is inconsistent with your behaviour.

TIME TO REFLECT

LaPiere's (1934) study is often cited by textbook authors and university teachers – incuding us – as evidence that attitudes and behaviour can be weakly correlated. However, a point not often noted is that *arguably* LaPiere's (1934) study did not measure attitudes exactly. Rather, it assessed business owners' hypothetical predictions about their own behaviour. Arguably, what the classic study reveals is that people's statements about their behaviour are not highly correlated with their actual behaviours. In keeping with this possibility, Kormos and Gifford (2014) found that participants' self-reports of pro-environmental behaviours were correlated with their actual behaviours, but the correlation coefficient was only .46. Squaring this coefficient provides the amount of variance shared by self-reported and observed behaviour: .21, or 21 per cent. This means that fully 79 per cent of observable behaviour has nothing in common with self-reports. The discrepancy between self-reports and behaviours is a huge obstacle for researchers to overcome, especially when they cannot afford to use observational methods. Further, it might explain why attitudes are seldom strongly related to behaviours – since attitudes are typically measured through self-reports.

However, on many occasions, people's attitudes and behaviours are consistent with conscious attitudes. For example, you might hold strong right-wing political views and behave in support of these attitudes by becoming a member of conservative political parties and even participating in political rallies. People who overtly discriminate against particular social and ethnic groups will typically possess prejudice towards those groups. It is therefore too pessimistic to say that attitudes are not important. Indeed, social psychologists agree that it is less of a question of whether attitudes determine behaviours *at all,* but *when* they do so. Social psychological research has focused more on this question in recent years. Specifically, while attitudes do indeed predict behaviour on many occasions (Bohner & Wanke, 2002; Kraus, 1995; Petty & Krosnick, 1995), the situation and aspects of the attitudes themselves are important. Other features such as values and habits also predict the extent to which attitudes and behaviours are linked.

Situational factors

It is not always possible to express or act on our attitudes. As in the above example, we often do not want to hurt people's feelings, so we cannot openly express negative attitudes to their ethnicity or their most recent haircut. Likewise, acting on our political beliefs can sometimes be offensive because not everybody holds the same beliefs. Forcing one's attitudes on others can have negative consequences, so much of the time people keep their attitudes to themselves. Thus, there are many situational constraints on the link between attitudes and behaviours. In many cases, situational constraints prevent the expression of attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fazio, Roskos-Ewoldsen & Powell, 1994). In most of these cases, these situational constraints relate to the strength of social norms and conventions.

On the other hand, many situational factors facilitate the expression of attitudes. For example, it becomes easier to express one's political attitudes in an online political forum or at a rally. Thus, perhaps unsurprisingly, people tend to seek out situations where they are able to express their attitudes (Snyder & Ickes, 1985) and, as a result, the attitudes can be strengthened (DeBono & Snyder, 1995). The expression of attitudes is often determined by situational factors but, at the same time, attitudes determine what situations people choose to find themselves in.

Attitudinal factors

Aspects of the attitudes themselves can determine the extent to which they are associated with behaviours. One factor is how the attitudes were formed in the first place. Some evidence suggests that attitudes formed on the basis of experience are more strongly associated with behaviours than attitudes based on observation or other indirect ways (Fazio & Zanna, 1981; Haddock, Rothman, Reber & Schwarz, 1999). For example, Haddock et al. demonstrated that the strength of people's attitudes towards assisted suicide was influenced by people's experience of having a direct encounter with assisted suicide. In general, attitudes that have been formed through a direct experience are more closely related to actual behaviour (Doll & Ajzen 1992; Regan & Fazio, 1977).

The strength of the attitude is also important. In short, the stronger the attitudes, the more likely they influence behaviours (Holland, Verplanken & van Knippenberg, 2002; Petkova, Ajzen & Driver, 1995). Attitude strength is determined by a number of factors. First, the accessibility of the attitude is important, that is, how easily it comes to mind and how quickly it can be expressed (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998). Stronger attitudes tend to be more accessible and therefore exert a stronger influence on behaviour (Fazio, 1986). Fazio argues

that accessible attitudes are more useful because they are quickly retrieved from memory and help people make decisions more easily. They can be automatically activated and have a stronger impact on behaviour (Fazio, Blascovich & Driscoll, 1992; Fazio & Powell, 1997). At the same time, highly accessible attitudes can be resistant to change and can hinder decision making in situations where attitude objects change (Fazio, Ledbetter & Towles-Schwen, 2000). Second, the intensity of the attitude – or how strong an emotional reaction is evoked – influences attitude strength (Crano, 1995; Fishbein, 1967; Krosnick, 1988; Sivacek & Crano, 1982). Third, the extent to which a person knows a lot about the issue or object in question influences attitude strength (Krosnick & Smith, 1994). Finally, and related, the more a person has thought about their attitude or elaborated it, the stronger it is. Nayakankuppam, Priester, Kwon, Donovan, and Petty (2018) experimentally manipulated attitude strength by instructing participants to think deeply about information about novel attitude objects such as brands of toothpaste or cameras, versus thinking superficially, for example by counting up the vowels in the information. Though this manipulation did not affect how much people liked or disliked the attitude objects (the valence of their attitudes), it did affect the strength of those attitudes (the extent to which participants felt their attitudes were certain and fixed). Equipped with a strong (vs. weak) attitude, participants later made quicker evaluative judgements about these attitude objects. Eye-tracking equipment also showed that they later spent less time searching for information on the screen to make their judgements (see Figure 4.11). Apparently, strong attitudes are retrieved from memory to guide later judgements (and presumably behaviours). When attitudes are weak, however, those later judgements may be constructed on the spot, taking into account additional information.

Attitude-behaviour consistency is determined by the specificity, as well as the strength, of attitudes. Some attitudes are focused on specific objects or situations and some are more

FIGURE 4.11 Eye-tracking 'heat maps' reveal effects of attitude strength (elaboration) on information search
Nayakankuppam et al. (2018) had participants think deeply (high elaboration) or superficially (low elaboration) about consumer brands. High elaboration caused participants to form stronger attitudes. Later, participants were presented with visual displays like these, and asked to evaluate it. While doing so, their eye movements were tracked with sophisticated equipment. These 'heat maps' reveal where participants' eye gazes tended to fixate. You can see that participants with strong attitudes (in the 'high elaboration' condition) did not bother much to look at the additional information lower in the screen. Rather, they tended to fixate on the product itself. This suggests that since they already had an established attitude, participants with a strong attitude did not need to 'construct' an attitude on the spot. Those with a weaker attitude needed this information, on the other hand, to come up with a judgement about the product.

Source: Nayakankuppam et al. (2018). Copyright (2018), reprinted with permission from Elsevier

general. For example, a person might be prejudiced against immigrants in general, or they may focus their negative attitudes on one specific immigrant group. Research suggests that the link between attitudes and behaviour is closest when the level of specificity is more closely matched (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, 2005; Fazio et al., 1994). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) argued that one reason why many studies have failed to find a close correspondence between attitudes and behaviours is because researchers have tried to predict specific behaviours from general attitudes. A study by Davidson and Jaccard (1979) supported this argument. They found that women's general attitudes towards birth control did not predict their use of the contraceptive pill as well as more specific attitudes, such as their attitudes towards using the contraceptive pill within the next two years. Likewise, whether a person is unfaithful to their partner in specific ways is not predicted as well by their attitudes to faithfulness in general, as by their attitudes to those specific behaviours (Hackathorn, Mattingly, Clark & Mattingly, 2011). In summary, the more specific the attitude in question, the more closely it is likely to be linked to behaviour.

Values and ideology

Introducing the idea of certain values also influences people's choices so they become more aligned with those values (Verplanken & Holland, 2002), such as when people engage in a task where they think about environmental values, they behave in a way that is friendly to the environment. Ideology is a similar construct to values. As we saw earlier, this concept refers to an interrelated and widely shared set of beliefs that serves to explain the social situation (Thompson, 1990). Ideologies typically refer to social or political contexts (e.g., sociopolitical and religious ideologies). They can influence values, attitudes and intentions to commit behaviours (Crandall, 1994).

Theory of planned behaviour Theory concerning how attitudes predict behaviour. It argues that several factors, including subjective norms, attitudes towards the behaviour and perceived behavioural control, determine behavioural intentions concerning the behaviour, and, in turn, intentions strongly determine whether the behaviour is performed.

Theory of reasoned action Predecessor to the theory of planned behaviour. It did not take perceived behavioural control into account as a predictor of intentions.

Habits and individual differences

A person's habits can also predict their behaviour on future occasions. For example, if a woman gets into the habit of conducting breast self-examination every month, this will be a strong predictor of her intentions to continue doing so. In a study that supports this hypothesis, Trafimow (2000) found that university students who habitually used condoms during sex reported that they intended to do so in future sexual encounters and, specifically, on the next occasion. It has been argued that when behaviours are habitual, people do not need to think about their attitudes or whether their actions are appropriate. In some respects, the attitude-congruent behaviour becomes automatic (e.g., Norman & Conner, 2006; see Orbell & Verplanken, 2015 and Verplanken, 2018 for reviews).

Individual differences can also determine the link between attitudes and behaviours. For example, a person's consistency in answering questions about their personality is more likely to be higher in their behaviours on relevant dimensions (Bem & Allen, 1974). To give an example, a person who typically responds to an extraversion/introversion scale in the same way will typically behave in an extraverted or introverted manner in social interactions more so than someone whose responses are less consistent.

How do attitudes predict behaviours?

In addition to knowing the conditions under which attitudes predict behaviour, social psychologists are also interested in how it all happens. The **theory of planned behaviour** (and its predecessor, the **theory of reasoned action**) proposes that people make a decision to behave in a particular way as a result of a sequence of rational thought processes (Ajzen &

Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen, 1991). First, a person considers various behavioural options and their consequences and possible outcomes. These options are evaluated and a decision is made to perform a behaviour or not. This decision is then indicated by *behavioural intentions,* which are argued to be a key predictor of whether or not the behaviour is actually performed. These intentions are further influenced by a person's attitudes towards the behaviour (whether they think the behaviour will have positive or negative consequences), subjective norms (what people think others will think about the behaviour) and perceived behavioural control (whether or not a person thinks they can perform the behaviour).

The theory works as follows. If a person is considering an action, such as joining a progressive political party, the question of whether or not they do so can be addressed by the theory of planned behaviour (see Figure 4.12). Specifically, the intention to join the political party depends on the person's intentions to do so, which are determined by their attitudes towards the behaviour (is joining the party a good thing to do?), subjective norms (do others think that joining the party is a good thing to do?) and perceived behavioural control (is it easy to join the party?). If these factors are satisfactory and intentions are strong, the person is more likely to join the political party. If, on the other hand, one of the determinants of intentions is not favourable (e.g., the person's closest friends abhor that particular political party), the chances of the person forming the intention and eventually performing the behaviour are reduced.

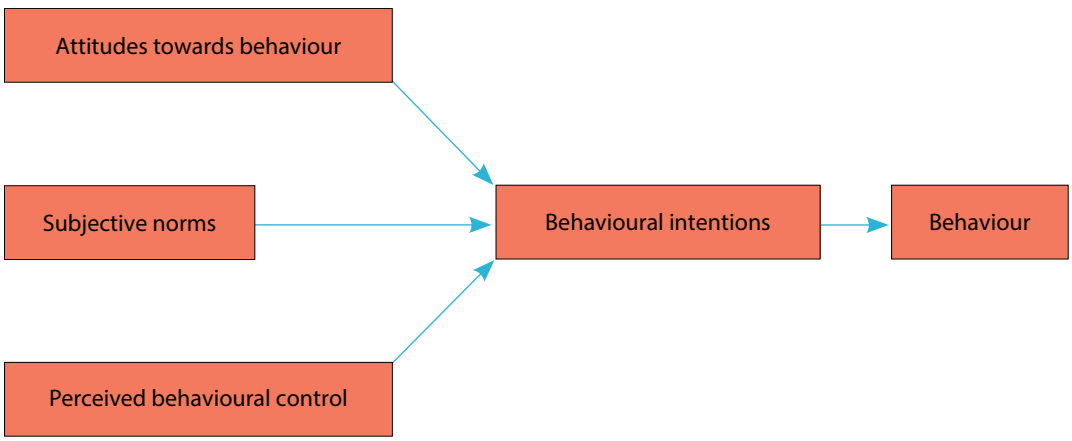

FIGURE 4.12 The theory of planned behaviour In the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), attitudes towards a behaviour translate into intentions, and then into behaviour, when people think significant others approve of the behaviour (subjective norms) and when people think they are able to carry out the behaviour (perceived behavioural control).

The theory of planned behaviour has been applied extensively in health psychology, such as in the study of safe sex behaviours (e.g., Sheeran & Taylor, 1999; Tyson, Covey & Rosenthal, 2014), smoking (Godin, Valois, Lepage & Desharnais, 1992; Hukkelberg, Hagtvet & Kovac, 2014), sleep (Madden, Ellen & Ajzen, 1992) and alcohol consumption (e.g., Conner, Warren, Close & Sparks, 1999; Cooke, Dahdah, Norman & French, 2014). It has also been applied to the study of academic achievement (Ajzen & Madden, 1986) and driving behaviour (e.g., Parker, Manstead & Stradling, 1995), among many others. The theory has been found to be good at predicting what people do (for a review, see Armitage & Conner, 2001, and for a commentary on criticisms see Ajzen, 2015). The theory of planned behaviour has also been supplemented with Gollwitzer's (1993, 1999; Gollwitzer & Oettingen, 2013) concept of implementation intentions. If people not only form an intention to do or achieve something,

but also specify exactly when and how they will do so, the link between intentions and behaviours becomes much stronger (see Applying Social Psychology at the end of the chapter for more details).

Unlike the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behaviour, the *attitude to behaviour process model* focuses on situations where a person does not have time to carefully reflect on different behaviours and their consequences. How do people react and perform a behaviour quickly, as they often need to? Fazio (1989) has argued that sometimes behaviours are determined by our attitudes in a more automatic manner. Encountering the attitude object, or a relevant cue to the object, may automatically activate your attitude (i.e., your evaluation) of that object. The extent to which your attitude is activated depends on the strength of the mental association between the object and its evaluation. Once these attitudes are activated, they will shape your perceptions of the object and the situation. Our awareness of social norms (what is generally acceptable and unacceptable) is also activated.

Put together, and all happening very quickly, these factors influence our behaviour. So, for example, if a random person interrupts a private conversation you are having with a friend, this event triggers attitudes about people who interrupt. You are also likely to think of the general social norms surrounding conversations – one of which is that people generally know not to interrupt private talk between friends. You then quickly perceive the event (probably that this person is rude) and you are likely to behave accordingly by asking the person to leave you and your friend alone. So, this theory proposes that people behave rather spontaneously when their attitudes are activated.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

So far, we have discussed the extent to which people's behaviours are consistent with their attitudes, when attitudes predict behaviours, and how this occurs. We know our attitudes do not always predict our behaviours, and this, of course, has consequences. Think of how it makes you feel when you comment positively on your friend's recent disastrous haircut. What emotions do you experience when you articulate an attitude you don't really mean? Most of us would agree that we feel uncomfortable. After all, we are not being true to ourselves. Another classic example is the fact that most people believe the evidence of a strong link between smoking and lung cancer, and yet a significant percentage of the population continues to smoke. People know they are not doing the right thing by their bodies, yet still continue with the behaviour. Social psychologists call this being in a state of **cognitive dissonance** (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance is defined as the unpleasant psychological state that occurs when people notice that their attitudes and behaviours (or their various attitudes) are inconsistent with each other. The study of cognitive dissonance has uncovered one of the most profound, surprising and important messages of social psychology – while our attitudes influence our behaviour, our behaviour also strongly influences our attitudes. What we do affects how we think and feel.

Cognitive dissonance
An unpleasant psychological state that occurs when people notice that their attitudes and behaviours (or their attitudes) are inconsistent with each other.

Cognitive dissonance was empirically demonstrated in a classic study by Festinger and Carlsmith (1959). They had people participate in a boring experiment where they were asked to perform repetitive tasks such as turning pegs on a board and removing the pegs one by one and then putting them all back. At the end of the study, the experimenter asked the participant for help. If they agreed to help, their task was to convince the next 'participant' (actually, a confederate) that the task was enjoyable and interesting. The payment for telling this lie was either $1 – obviously

Image Source/David Ryle

a measly sum for lying – or $20 – which in the late 1950s was a princely sum. Festinger and Carlsmith predicted that participants who agreed to describe the task as enjoyable to another participant would be put in a state of cognitive dissonance: they had volunteered to perform a behaviour that was inconsistent with their attitudes. Since $1 is not enough to justify lying, Festinger and Carlsmith predicted that participants' attitudes towards the experiment would change. Participants could not reasonably attribute their lie to the monetary reward, and so to resolve the inconsistency between their behaviour (saying the task was interesting) and attitudes (they found the task boring), they would have to revise their attitudes (so privately evaluate the task as less boring).

Findings confirmed this hypothesis. As can be seen in Figure 4.13, participants in the $1 reward condition rated the experiment as less boring than control participants, who were not asked to convince the confederate that the task was interesting. Further, in a condition where participants were paid $20 to lie to the participants, they rated the experiment as relatively boring. Since $20 was a handsome reward for lying, participants could resolve the dissonance between their attitudes and behaviour by attributing their behaviour to the reward. This is a striking finding: paying participants more to convince others that a task is interesting caused them to think they enjoyed it less.

This is a clear example of what happens to people's attitudes and behaviours when they experience cognitive dissonance. Festinger (1957) argued that people's motivation to reduce dissonance, rather than changing people's behaviours, can actually change their attitudes. In other words, to deal with dissonance, people often change the way they think rather than the

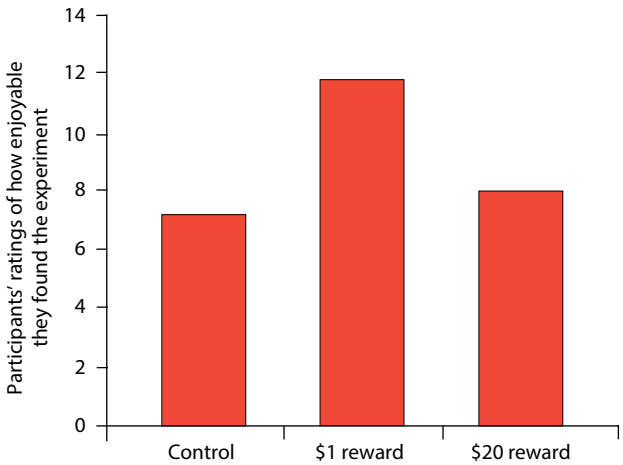

FIGURE 4.13 The phenomenon of cognitive dissonance
Participants in a boring experiment rated the experiment as less boring when they were paid a measly $1 to tell the next participant they enjoyed the experiment. To deal with the attitude-behaviour inconsistency, they changed their attitudes about the boring experiment.

Source: Data from Festinger and Carlsmith (1959)

way they behave. Cooper and Fazio (1984) argued that four conditions need to be satisfied for dissonance to produce these types of effects:

1. The individual has to realize that the inconsistency has negative consequences: if the inconsistency has no negative consequences, it is unlikely that people will feel tension between the attitude and the behaviour. For example, if people reflect on the evidence that smoking causes ill health and the evidence is dismissed, no tension will occur. On the other hand, people who endorse the attitude that the behaviour (smoking) causes ill health are likely to experience cognitive dissonance (Cooper & Brehm, 1971).
2. The individual has to take responsibility for the action: specifically, for dissonance to occur, the person needs to feel responsible for the attitude-incongruent behaviour. In the case of smoking, people need to think they are freely responsible for the decision to smoke. If people feel they have been told what to do, or coerced into performing the behaviour, the behaviour will not necessarily be inconsistent with their attitudes, so dissonance is unlikely to occur (Linder, Cooper & Jones, 1967).
3. The individual has to experience physiological arousal: dissonance is an uncomfortable physical experience (Croyle & Cooper, 1983). For smokers, they probably feel unhappy or anxious that their smoking could cause them ill health.
4. The individual has to attribute the feeling of physiological arousal to the action itself: people need to be able to make the link between the feeling (e.g., being unhappy or anxious) and the behaviour (e.g., smoking) (Losch & Cacioppo, 1990).

These conditions produce a state of cognitive dissonance. Studies of cognitive dissonance suggest that people who are in a state of tension will change their attitudes to be more consistent with the behaviour they have performed. In many cases, the tension is fairly minimal. For example, it requires little commitment for a participant to tell another participant the white lie that a boring study is interesting. However, there is some evidence to suggest that the state of tension is especially strong when the inconsistencies are self-relevant, that is, they compromise people's positive sense of self (Baumeister, 1982; Steele, 1988). The need to reconcile inconsistent behaviours and attitudes therefore becomes stronger. For example, imagine putting up with an unhappy long-term relationship or working in a dead-end job. Because the feeling of dissonance is often chronically uncomfortable, people usually want to do something about it. As you will see later on in Chapter 9, people who pay a significant price for being a member of a group (e.g., by engaging in dangerous or humiliating initiation rites) often identify more with the group and become more committed to it. According to dissonance theory (Aronson, 1968; Festinger, 1957), there are various ways in which people can reduce dissonance so that they feel better about what they are doing.

Reducing dissonance

First, people can approach the dissonance directly. In other words, they can focus on explicitly addressing the discrepancies between their attitudes and behaviours. There are various different ways to do this. First, people can change their attitudes so that they are more consistent with their behaviours. In the case of making comments about a friend's haircut, a person can attempt to change their attitude about the haircut by carefully evaluating it and convincing themselves that it is not so bad after all. A way of convincing oneself in this way is to find new information that supports the inconsistency with the behaviour. For example, similar haircuts might have been praised in the popular press or worn by a top model, supporting one's comments to the friend that the haircut is a good look. In short, a person can change their attitudes so that they closely match their behaviours. This everyday way of

reducing cognitive dissonance is well supported in the literature. For example, Elliot and Devine (1994) showed that the discomfort experienced by attitude-behaviour inconsistency could be alleviated by attitude change.

Another way to reduce dissonance is simply by reducing the importance of the inconsistency. For example, we might decide that it is not such a bad thing to say one thing about a friend's haircut and mean something else. In other words, we might trivialize the discrepancy between our attitudes and behaviours. To do so, we may argue that the attitudes are not important in the first place, so if they are inconsistent with what we actually say or do, this is not really much of a problem. One study suggests that people do this with respect to cigarette smoking. In a study with an undergraduate student sample, Pervin and Yatko (1965) found that smokers reduced dissonance by minimizing the validity of anti-cancer research findings and the personal danger of smoking.

Another approach is less direct. Instead of addressing the attitude-behaviour discrepancy explicitly, people may instead seek to reduce the discomfort associated with the discrepancy (Steele, 1988). Steele argues that the choice of such strategies occurs when attitudes are more important and we do not want to change them. For example, a person might hold strong views in support of one political party but compliment a friend's views in support of dubious opposing policies. This is likely to feel uncomfortable, and one way to reduce the discomfort is to engage in a process of **self-affirmation**. Here, people reaffirm positive thoughts about themselves. In the above example, they may remember that they attended a political rally the week before and that they are an active campaigner for their party. By affirming their positive self-view and reminding themselves of the importance of their attitudes, people can reduce the discomfort created by dissonance (e.g., Elliot & Devine, 1994). Research also suggests that there are other ways in which people can reduce dissonance. For example, expressing positive affect can make people feel better (Cooper, Fazio & Rhodewalt, 1978), taking the opportunity to justify transgressions can reduce feelings of dissonance (Rodrigues & Girandola, 2017), and consuming alcohol also helps (Steele, Southwick & Critchlow, 1981).

Self-affirmation
Restoring positive self-views when faced with cognitive dissonance.

We have seen that there are several options for people to reduce cognitive dissonance. However, it is also clear that people do not always seek to reduce dissonance. Think, for example, of smokers who know all the evidence of the dangers of smoking and yet still continue to smoke. Why do they do this? In many cases, the addiction to smoking prevents a person from dealing with the discrepancy between attitudes and behaviours. A smoker may know that smoking is harmful but they do not seek to reduce dissonance because the addiction overrides the need to do so. This also raises the question of just how negative the state of dissonance actually is. If people live with it relatively easily, can we necessarily say that it produces negative affect? The answer is yes. Harmon-Jones (2000) examined if dissonance makes people feel bad. He had participants write counterattitudinal essays (essays in which they were asked to express views contrary to their own) – in this case, they were asked to write that a boring paragraph was interesting. Some of the participants were asked to perform the task under conditions of low choice, that is, they were simply asked to argue that the boring paragraph was interesting. The remaining participants, however, were asked to do this under conditions of high choice. That is, they were told they could write what they wanted but it would be appreciated if they could write that the boring paragraph was interesting. Harmon-Jones predicted that an aversive sense of dissonance would arise only in this condition, since participants were expressing, *of their own choice*, attitudes inconsistent with their beliefs. Findings confirmed this prediction. Participants in the high choice condition felt more discomfort and greater negative affect than participants in the low choice condition. This effect occurred despite the fact that participants threw their essays away afterwards. Thus, the negative feelings could not have been due to the concern

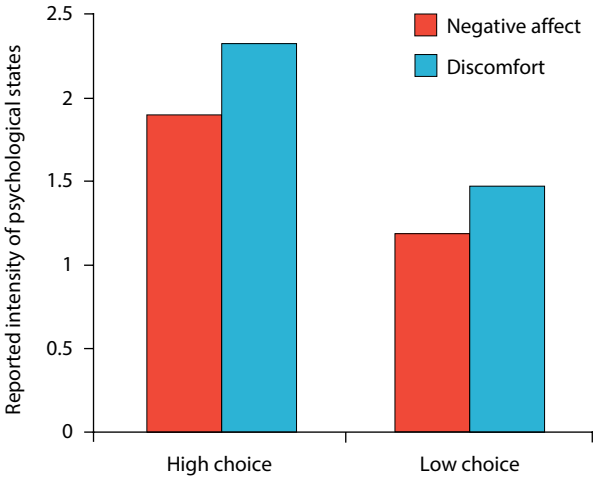

FIGURE 4.14 The affect of cognitive dissonance
Participants who wrote counterattitudinal statements under voluntary conditions experienced more discomfort and negative affect than participants who had no choice but to write the statements.

Source: Data from Harmon-Jones (2000)

that others may sanction them for their comments. In general, therefore, dissonance appears to make people feel uncomfortable (see Figure 4.14).

This feeling of discomfort is crucial to cognitive dissonance theory and separates it from a closely related theory that we briefly encountered in Chapter 2 – self-perception theory (Bem, 1967, 1972). Bem argued that since we do not have reliable knowledge of our own attitudes, we infer them from our behaviour. Thus, when we behave in a way that is inconsistent with our attitudes, we unconsciously infer that our attitude position cannot be very strong, after all. If we say we enjoyed a task when given a $1 reward, rather than a $20 reward, it is a reasonable inference that we must have enjoyed it at some level. In order to make this inference, we do not need to go through aversive psychological states, neither do we need to be motivated to escape them. However, research has shown that people do experience discomfort in cognitive dissonance experiments, much as Festinger's (1957) model predicted (Galinsky, Stone & Cooper, 2000; Kiesler & Pallak, 1976). And, as we have seen, the extent of this emotional discomfort is related to the extent of attitude change (Elliot & Devine, 1994).

Biological versus cultural influences on cognitive dissonance

From largely European and US-based studies, it cannot necessarily be concluded that all people experience dissonance. However, research does suggest that dissonance is common across cultures (Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005). Not only is it universal among humans, it also seems that cognitive dissonance is experienced by other animals, too.

We will illustrate this point by describing a delightful experiment by Egan, Santos and Bloom (2007) into post-decisional dissonance among monkeys. But first, you will need to understand what *post-decisional dissonance* is and how it relates to the theory of cognitive dissonance. The idea is that when you make a choice between two or more options, the fact that you have chosen one is dissonant with the fact that the other options also had appealing features. To resolve this dissonance, people need to change their attitudes by derogating the choice they did not make, and/or increasing their positive evaluation of their chosen option. Results of an early experiment by Brehm (1956) were true to this prediction. US consumers rated a variety of domestic appliances and were then allowed to choose between two they evaluated equally, to take home as a gift. After making their choice, participants' evaluation of their chosen appliance increased, while their impression of the other appliance worsened.

The setup of Egan et al.'s (2007) study was as follows. Monkeys were initially presented with two different coloured chocolate sweets (specifically, M&Ms) in see-through cages. In the 'free choice' condition of the experiment, the cage was open in front of both M&Ms, so the monkey could choose which one it wanted (the openings were placed so that the monkey could reach its preferred M&M, but not both at the same time). In the 'no choice' condition of the experiment, the opening to just one of the M&Ms was open, so the monkey could only reach one of them. After the monkey had taken the M&M, the researchers gave the monkey a choice between the M&M it had not taken, and a new M&M in a third colour. The dependent measure was how often the monkey took the new, third M&M rather than the one they had not taken in the first trial. What would you predict would happen, on the basis of post-decisional dissonance? Well, cognitive dissonance theory suggests that in the free choice condition, monkeys would be more likely to reject the M&M they had not taken in the first trial. This is because the appealing qualities

of the non-chosen M&M are dissonant with the fact that the monkey had chosen the other one. This leads to a revision of attitudes – specifically, to derogation of the non-chosen M&M. Thus, when given a choice between this M&M and a new one, they opt for the new one. On the other hand, monkeys in the no choice condition experience no dissonance and do not derogate the M&M they could not choose in the first trial. And what were the results? They supported these predictions. In the no choice condition, monkeys chose the M&M they could not take in the first trial around 60 per cent of the time. In the free choice condition, they chose the M&M they did not take in the first trial only 39 per cent of the time, preferring the new, third M&M instead.

Alert readers may have spotted a potential problem with this experimental paradigm – perhaps monkeys reject the non-chosen M&M in the second trial simply because they dislike it. If they dislike yellow M&Ms, for example, they will not choose it in the first trial, nor will they choose it in the second. Hardly surprising, you might say. This is, in fact, a criticism of the 'free choice' paradigm in the study of post-decisional dissonance – positive attitudes to the chosen object and negative attitudes to the rejected object may not reflect post-decisional dissonance but simply pre-decisional preferences (Chen & Risen, 2010; Risen & Chen, 2010). Egan et al. (2007) attempted to control for this by carefully pretesting each monkey's preference for M&Ms. They ensured that monkeys were given triads of M&Ms that they had preferred equally in an earlier session. However, this does not guarantee that monkeys had not changed their minds since the time their preferences were initially tested (some days before), or that on the day of the main experiment, they simply liked some colours more than others.

Fortunately, a simple experiment suggests that although this alternative interpretation cannot be ruled out, the free choice paradigm does genuinely reveal that making a choice causes people to valorize the alternative they chose and derogate the alternative they did not choose. In a follow-up study, Egan, Bloom and Santos (2010) gave monkeys the illusion that they had chosen one of two sweets (this time, Skittles). They did this by showing monkeys two different Skittles, hiding them in a box in front of the monkey, but then covertly removing a Skittle. The monkey was then allowed to put its hand into the box, thinking that there were two Skittles, but in fact there was only one. After the monkey had taken the Skittle from the box, the experimenter pretended to remove the other Skittle from the box, to heighten the illusion that the monkey had made a free choice. In a second trial, the monkeys really did have a free choice, this time between the Skittle they had been led to believe they 'rejected' from the first trial and a second Skittle (see Figure 4.15). When they thought they had freely chosen not to take the Skittle in the first trial, they rejected it in the second trial, in favour of a new alternative, 60 per cent of the time. When they thought they had no choice the first time, they rejected it significantly less often – only 49 per cent of the time, which is how much you would expect them to reject it by chance.

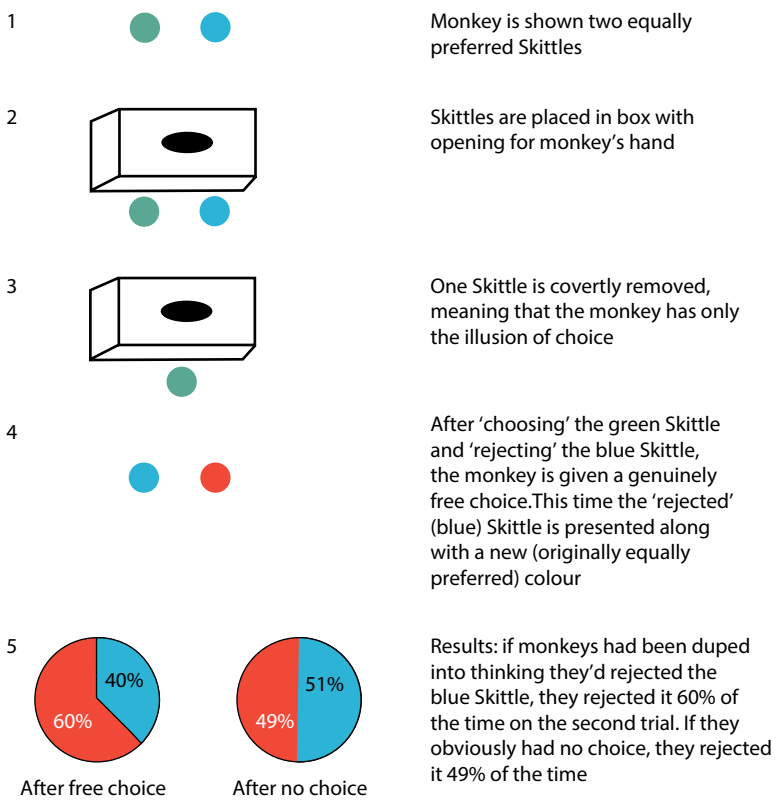
1
Monkey is shown two equally preferred Skittles
2
Skittles are placed in box with opening for monkey's hand
3
One Skittle is covertly removed, meaning that the monkey has only the illusion of choice
4
After 'choosing' the green Skittle and 'rejecting' the blue Skittle, the monkey is given a genuinely free choice.This time the 'rejected' (blue) Skittle is presented along with a new (originally equally preferred) colour
5
40%
60%
51%
49%
Results: if monkeys had been duped into thinking they'd rejected the blue Skittle, they rejected it 60% of the time on the second trial. If they obviously had no choice, they rejected it 49% of the time
After free choice
After no choice

FIGURE 4.15 Depiction of Egan et al.'s (2010) study Egan et al. (2010) showed that monkeys display cognitive dissonance – specifically post-decisional dissonance. In post-decisional dissonance, people (and monkeys!) are motivated to derogate an option they believe they have rejected. This is believed to occur because seeing a rejected option as attractive could produce conflict between our choice and our attitudes.

The genius of this 'blind choice' paradigm is that the monkeys' choices in the first trial cannot reflect their preferences, since their free choice was an illusion. In other words, their attitudes could not have affected their behaviour. Their rejection of the second sweet in the following trial, compared to the control group who did not believe they had chosen, shows that choosing an option – or believing one has chosen an option – affects one's preferences. This is a clear case in which behaviour affects attitudes. Egan et al. (2010) obtained much the same results with a sample of human children. Also, Sharot, Velasquez and Dolan (2010) independently came up with another version of the blind choice paradigm and showed that adult humans respond in much the same way. Participants chose between two holiday packages, not knowing what the holiday destinations were. To give participants the illusion of informed choice, they were told that the holiday destinations associated with the two packages were flashing on the screen subliminally, and that such information affects people's choices. In fact, only nonsense strings of characters (e.g. '&^£%^&') were appearing. After making their choice between options A and B, participants were told, at random, that they had 'chosen' a holiday to Greece over a holiday to Thailand (or vice versa). This caused participants to subsequently rate the holiday they thought they had chosen more favourably than the alternative.

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Thus, we can say that cognitive dissonance appears not to be unique to humans (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2018; Harmon-Jones, Haslam & Bastian, 2017). It is not clear whether cognitive dissonance confers some kind of survival advantage, and therefore may have evolved, or whether it is a by-product of some other more universal cognitive and emotional machinery possessed by humans and other animals alike. For all animals, human or not, the knowledge function of attitudes means that a consistent set of attitudes about the world is likely to be advantageous, that is, there is some survival advantage in preserving a consistent set of knowledge about the world (McGregor, Nash, Mann & Phills, 2010).

This is not to say that culture is not important to cognitive dissonance. Some studies have found that post-decisional dissonance effects – justifying one's choices – were not revealed in Asian participants (e.g., Heine & Lehman, 1997). However, rather than affecting the amount of cognitive dissonance that people experience, culture seems to affect the specific triggers that cause it. Hoshino-Browne et al. (2005) found that cultural Easterners (Canadians of Asian

heritage), but not Westerners (Canadians of European heritage), were more likely to engage in irrational derogation of a non-chosen alternative specifically when they were making choices for a friend. Collectivistic cultures place more emphasis on social obligations, and so making a bad choice for another person is an especially acute threat to self-esteem. Individualistic cultures place more emphasis on being a competent and self-sufficient individual, so making a bad choice for yourself is an especially acute threat to self-esteem. The self is implicated in cognitive dissonance effects – and since culture shapes the self (Chapter 2), it also shapes how cognitive dissonance is created by specific situations.

Hypocrisy

When attitudes and behaviour are inconsistent, the discomfort that people experience can often be likened to **hypocrisy**. In particular, when people say they support a particular attitude or behaviour, but act in a way that is inconsistent with the attitude or behaviour, they look (and often feel) like a hypocrite. For example, a person may be a strong public advocate of limiting energy usage to reduce the impact of climate change, but may own a large home with many rooms and many appliances. Perhaps this person can 'talk the talk' but does not 'walk the walk'. One only has to think of the criticism faced by Al Gore, former US vice president and subject of the 2006 documentary *An Inconvenient Truth,* to see how detrimental this kind of hypocrisy – whether true or simply alleged – can be. However, feelings of hypocrisy like this can be useful. In particular, if people are aware they are publicly advocating an attitude or behaviour but behaving inconsistently, they can experience strong dissonance (e.g., Aronson, Fried & Stone, 1991). It is unlikely that the strong feelings of dissonance would be eliminated by the tactics we discussed earlier, such as self-affirmation and doing other positive things. Instead, the person may need to act in a way that directly removes the dissonance.

Hypocrisy Publicly supporting an attitude or behaviour and yet behaving in a manner that is inconsistent with the attitude or behaviour.

For example, Stone, Wiegand, Cooper and Aronson (1997) asked a set of participants to make a video where they advocated the use of condoms to promote safe sex. Afterwards, they were asked to think of reasons why they personally had not used condoms in the past, *or* reasons why people in general might not use condoms. The participants who were asked to think about why they, rather than people in general, had not used condoms were later more likely to take up an opportunity to buy condoms. Buying condoms is a direct way to reduce dissonance – changing one's behaviour to be more in line with attitudes. They were less likely to reduce dissonance by affirming self-esteem in another way (in this case, Stone et al. gave them an opportunity to donate to a homeless charity). Stone et al. argued that the maximization of hypocrisy made people more motivated to reduce dissonance, and therefore they chose the most direct route to do so. In summary, feelings of hypocrisy can bring about positive behaviour change. When people are painfully aware that their behaviours do not match up to their own publicly stated standards and they have the means to rectify this discrepancy, it is likely they will change their behaviour to be more consistent (Walton & Wilson, 2018).

EMBODIED SOCIAL COGNITION

Cognitive dissonance is not the only means by which our behaviour can affect our attitudes. Research suggests that people's attitudes are often influenced by their physical actions, even at the most basic level. Early research in this area drew on self-perception theory (Bem, 1967, 1972), which asserts that people become aware of their own attitudes by looking at what they do. Thus, people look at their own behaviours and infer their attitudes from those behaviours. This may seem a bit strange – most people would think they always know their own attitudes – but there is some evidence that people infer their attitudes from their overt behaviours, and this is not only the case for weak or trivial attitudes. After writing counterattitudinal essays, arguing, for example, that students should have less control over what they learn, people come

Embodiment/ embodied social cognition An area of study where research shows broadly that bodily states influence attitudes, social perception and emotion.

to believe that their attitudes were originally more in favour of their written position (Bem & McConnell, 1970). People inferred their attitude not from what they thought originally, but from what they had written.

As mentioned earlier, this happens at an even more basic level. For example, some research suggests that the physical movements people engage in while they are evaluating stimuli (e.g., objects, people) can determine how favourably the stimuli are evaluated. Specifically, engaging in behaviours that typically accompany positive attitudes tends to lead people to evaluate stimuli more positively, whereas engaging in behaviours that typically accompany negative attitudes has the opposite effect – people tend to rate the stimuli less favourably. This effect has come to be known as an example of **embodiment** or **embodied social cognition**.

Alice Ferns

Alice Ferns

FIGURE 4.16 Investigating embodied social cognition Strack et al. (1988) asked people to view funny cartoons while holding a pen between their lips or teeth. Participants in the 'teeth' condition rated the cartoons as funny, arguably because this facial expression facilitates smiling compared to the 'lips' condition that inhibits smiling. This is an example of embodied social cognition.

For example, in one study, Wells and Petty (1980) asked participants to either nod their heads vertically (a behaviour associated with agreement) or shake their heads horizontally (a behaviour associated with disagreement) while listening to persuasive messages about a university-related topic. They found that the head movements later modulated participants' judgements of the message. Specifically, head nodding led to more positive attitudes towards the persuasive messages than head shaking (see also Tom, Pettersen, Lau, Burton & Cook, 1991). In another study, Cacioppo, Priester and Berntson (1993) investigated the relationship between another attitude-relevant movement (arm flexion/extension) and a novel stimulus. Specifically, they demonstrated that novel Chinese ideographs presented during arm flexion, that is, pushing upwards from underneath a table – a behaviour associated with approach and positive attitudes – were later evaluated more favourably than ideographs presented during arm extension, that is, pushing downwards from the top of a table – a behaviour associated with avoidance and negative attitudes. In another well-known study, Strack, Martin and Stepper (1988) asked participants to watch some funny cartoons while either holding a pen between their lips or their teeth (see Figure 4.16). Asking participants to hold the pen between the teeth facilitates the contraction of the zygomaticus (smiling muscle), whereas holding the pen between the lips inhibits the contraction of this muscle. Results from this study revealed that people rated the cartoons as funnier in the 'teeth' condition (see also Stepper & Strack, 1993).

EXPLORING FURTHER

The finding illustrated by Strack et al. (1988) has been dubbed the *facial feedback hypothesis* and has been the subject of various replication attempts in recent years. Some researchers (e.g., Wagenmakers et al., 2016) did not find the same effects. Noah, Schul and Mayo (2018), however, found that the original effects held so long as there was no video camera trained on the participants, as in the original studies, but disappeared when participants were on camera, as in the replication attempts. They concluded that both the original studies, and the later failed attempts to replicate their findings, were correct. Read Noah et al. to find out more, and for an explanation of why the video cameras may have had such an impact. It highlights how researchers need to take great care when running replications of studies and also when interpreting the results (recall our coverage in Chapter 1 on replication in social psychology).

To give another example, Schubert (2004) showed that making a fist can influence men's and women's automatic processing of words that are related to the notion of power. Many studies have yielded similar findings, demonstrating that bodily postures and physical behaviours are related to positive and negative inclinations towards objects (e.g., Epley & Gilovich, 2004; Friedman & Förster, 2000). Further, these inclinations influence attitudes towards the objects. Therefore, attitudes seem to be determined (partly at least) by people's embodied responses (see Niedenthal, Barsalou, Winkielman, Krauth-Gruber & Ric, 2005; Winkielman, Niedenthal, Wielgosz, Eelen & Kavanagh, 2015).

Sometimes, objects do not need to be present to create an embodied response. Förster and Strack (1997, 1998) conducted a study where participants were asked to generate the names of famous people and later classify them as people they liked, disliked or to whom they felt neutral. During the experiment, half the participants were asked to flex their arm upwards on a table (an approach behaviour) or to push down on the table (avoidance). Results revealed that participants who had performed the approach behaviour thought of more 'liked' famous people than disliked people. On the other hand, participants in the avoidance condition thought of more 'disliked' famous people than famous people they liked. Thus, variations in simple muscle movements in the arm caused people to recall completely different (evaluatively positive vs. negative) information from short-term memory.

These findings seem to show that our ability to perceive our bodily position and movement, or **proprioception**, plays a fundamental role in thoughts, feelings and actions that are logically irrelevant to what our bodies are doing. They suggest that the body is closely related to the processing of social information (Niedenthal et al., 2005). Theorists argue that cognitive representations (such as the mental 'building blocks' of attitudes) are closely related to their physical context. Specifically, cognition, or what we think, depends significantly on actual bodily states. To help understand this point, reflect on your behaviour during telephone conversations. You probably smile, frown, gesture, point and move around according to the content of your conversation, even though there is no communicative point in doing so, since you are talking to someone who cannot see you.

Proprioception
The perception of the body's position and movement.

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Our thoughts, feelings and bodily movements are so interconnected that it is difficult to 'turn off' our body language. As we shall shortly read, it may be more difficult to have certain thoughts or experience emotions when we cannot perform the body language normally associated with them.

Another line of research shows that people often embody the behaviours of other people in their presence by imitating or mimicking their actions (e.g., Hatfield, Cacioppo & Rapson, 1994; Neumann & Strack, 2000; Semin, 2000). As we will see in Chapter 5, this mimicry has important effects on our feelings of rapport with other people.

Embodiment of emotions

Emotions
Brief, specific psychological and physical responses to an object or event.

There is growing evidence for the embodiment of **emotions** – brief, specific psychological and physical responses to objects and events. One line of evidence for this is sensitivity to others' facial expressions, which can cause us to mimic their emotional responses. Wicker et al. (2003) showed that the insula – a brain area responsible for processing somatosensory information – was activated when participants were exposed to disgusting smells. Crucially, however, it was also activated when they watched a film in which other people were displaying expressions of disgust. So, there is some evidence to suggest that people have an embodied response to emotions they perceive in others' body language. This response is similar to their own response. Mirror neurons appear to be able to influence our emotional as well as our motor behaviour.

Other research has demonstrated that people mimic others' emotional facial expressions (e.g., Bush, Barr, McHugo & Lanzetta, 1989; Dimberg, 1982). To give an example of how this works in the laboratory, Bavelas, Black, Lemery and Mullett (1986) asked a confederate to fake an injury and then grimace as if in pain. Participants who observed this behaviour were also more likely to grimace. They were more likely to do so if they could clearly see the actor's emotional expression. People's imitation of others' emotions seems, in many cases, to be automatic and sometimes even outside consciousness. For example, some research shows that people respond with positive and negative facial expressions to pictures of people smiling and frowning (Dimberg, Thunberg & Elmehed, 2000; Varcin, Grainger, Richmond, Bailey & Henry, in press). Other findings have shown that people automatically mimic facial expressions in pictures as they are asked to categorize them into emotional expressions (Wallbott, 1991).

Being able to mimic also helps people to recognize emotions in others' faces. In one study, Niedenthal, Brauer, Halberstadt and Innes-Ker (2001) asked participants to view a series of facial expressions being morphed into different facial expressions. The participants' task was to detect the point at which the expression changed. Some participants were free to mimic the faces being shown to them, while others were prevented from mimicking by being asked to hold a pen between their teeth and lips. It was found that participants who were free to mimic were quicker at detecting the point at which the expression changed than participants who were prevented from mimicking (see also Niedenthal, Ric & Krauth-Gruber, 2002). These findings are important because they show that feedback from facial mimicry helps people to process emotional expressions. This can be quite helpful in social interaction; for instance, psychological processes like this may help people to better empathize with others. In a demonstration supporting this prediction, Zajonc, Adelmann, Murphy and Niedenthal (1987) showed that couples' facial similarity was closer after 25 years of marriage than at the beginning of the marriage. Couples grow to look more and more like each other. This makes sense, since couples are motivated to empathize with each other and will be more likely to mimic each other's emotional expressions. Over time, this mimicry causes permanent changes in facial structure.

Other research has examined the emotional consequences of Botox treatment – the injection of a strain of botulism into the skin in order to reduce the signs of ageing. The injection has the effect of partially paralysing facial muscles, which gives rise to the subtle appearance of emotional blankness in the faces of those who opt for the treatment. If proprioception is crucial to emotional experience, we might expect that Botox patients' reduced ability to express emotion with their facial muscles would interfere with their perception and experience of emotion. This does, in fact, seem to be the case. Havas, Glenberg, Gutowski, Lucarelli and Davidson (2010) found that after undergoing Botox treatment, participants were slower to read sentences that referred to anger and sadness. The facial expressions of these emotions normally require the use of the newly paralysed muscle. Neal and Chartrand (2011) also found that Botox injections reduced people's ability to detect emotions on other people's faces (see also Lewis, 2018). Davis, Senghas, Brandt and Oschner (2010) found that Botox patients, compared to those undergoing other cosmetic treatments, were less likely to report negative emotions such as inability, depression and anxiety. Being less able to express these emotions with facial muscles seems to cause people to be less likely to experience them (Figure 4.17).

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FIGURE 4.17 Receiving a Botox injection The injection of Botox into the skin paralyses facial muscles and inflames tissues, leading not only to a temporarily more youthful appearance but also a reduced ability to express, and therefore perceive and experience, certain emotions.

TIME TO REFLECT

Do you think the reduction in negative affect following Botox is fundamentally heart-warming or deeply scary? In Chapters 2 and 11, we explore the phenomenon of objectification – the tendency to reduce oneself or others to their physical appearance – which seems largely to give rise to cosmetic surgery (Calogero & Pina, 2010). Davis et al.'s (2010) findings seem to suggest that by altering our appearance in this particular way, people really do reduce their capacity to experience emotion, and in this sense take one step to reducing themselves from a fully experiencing 'subject' to a non-experiencing 'object'. Other forms of cosmetic surgery do not induce facial paralysis and so do not have these strange emotional effects.

CRITICAL FOCUS

Embodied social cognition

Research findings linking the body and the mind have given rise to a movement known as 'embodied social cognition' or 'embodiment', which suggests that the body and its role in our attitudes, emotions and behaviours should be placed centre stage in social psychology (e.g., Barsalou, 1999; Marsh, Johnston, Richardson & Schmidt, 2009; Niedenthal, Winkielman, Mondillon & Vermeulen, 2009; Schubert & Semin, 2009; Winkielman & Kavanagh, 2012; Winkielman et al., 2015). The basic idea behind this movement is that the function of social cognition is to facilitate social action. Our brains and bodies have evolved together and constantly feed back to each other. Thus, it is a mistake to sharply separate mind and body (for a related view in clinical and cognitive psychology, see the engaging book by Damasio, 2006, called *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*). Advocates of this view oppose the traditional idea in psychology that our behaviour is guided by mental representations, separated from our senses and movements. In its place, they argue that our mental representations are deeply embedded in specific sensory modalities and in our bodily experiences, postures and movements. Thus, in place of abstract mentalistic concepts like schemas, they argue that social psychology should be concentrating more on perception and action.

While the findings associated with this position are undeniably fascinating, as we have seen, there is controversy over whether they cumulatively show that our social minds are really 'embodied'. A lot of findings are taken to fall under this umbrella, but may not show that our bodily sensations and movements are taking the place of our minds, as we traditionally understand them (Fiedler, 2009). Similarly, a lot of research commonly understood to be concerned with 'embodiment' may not reveal the role of our bodies and senses in our decision making but rather that human beings have developed sophisticated metaphors linking abstract concepts to specific physical experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999). We can understand these results simply in terms of mental schemas, without having to rethink the fundamental basis of social psychology.

Questions

1. As you revise this chapter, think about the concept of embodied social cognition. How many of the findings you have been reading about can be explained in terms of basic bodily and perceptual processes? How many seem to require abstract mental thought?
2. What other criticisms of the concept of embodiment can you find, using Google Scholar or another academic database? Using your critical thinking skills, what critiques of this approach can you come up with yourself?
3. Several studies in this area have been the subject of replication attempts. What can you find out about these? For a start, see the coverage on 'power posing' in Chapter 5. Take a look at this article in the *New Yorker* about power posing (Dominus, 2017) and an example of a replication attempt of this finding (Ranehill et al., 2015). See also the coverage of warmth in Chapter 3. Can you think up an experiment into embodied social cognition, along the lines of those you have read about in this chapter? Think of a gesture or posture, for example, that corresponds to a certain attitude or mindset. Can you covertly induce this posture, and test whether the bodily gesture can cause this? What dependent measure can you use?

EMOTIONS AND SOCIAL JUDGEMENT

Feelings-as-information perspective
Theory proposing that people often rely on their feelings – often gut instincts – to guide important social judgements.

Emotions help guide social judgement. Because many of the judgements and decisions people have to make are complex, they often rely on the way they feel about them to help them make judgements and come to decisions. For example, people may rely on a 'gut feeling' to decide whether or not to take a new job, buy a new car, move house or move in with their boyfriend/girlfriend rather than dealing with the vast array of information associated with the issue. According to Schwarz and Clore (1983), people use emotions as pieces of information to guide social judgement. This **feelings-as-information perspective** proposes that emotions provide fast and reliable information about the issue that help shape what people do (Clore, 1992; Clore & Parrott, 1991; Schwarz & Clore, 1983). According to Forgas (1995, 2000), people tend to use emotions as information when they make complex rather than simple judgements.

In a study testing this theory, Schwarz and Clore (1983) studied the effects of the weather on people's emotions. They approached volunteer participants on the telephone on either a sunny or cloudy day and asked them – all things considered – how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with their lives. They were also asked to rate their general happiness. In one condition, participants were just asked to rate their life satisfaction and happiness, the researchers predicting that participants would generally show greater life satisfaction on sunny rather than cloudy days. In another condition, participants were first asked about the weather, the researchers reasoning that people would attribute their life satisfaction and happiness to the weather and therefore discount these feelings when making these ratings. The researchers found evidence to support their theory. When asked to rate their happiness and life satisfaction (without thinking about the weather), participants predictably rated these variables higher when they were tested on a sunny rather than a cloudy day. On the other hand, participants who had been asked first about the weather rated their happiness and life satisfaction at the same level on both sunny and cloudy days (see Figure 4.18).

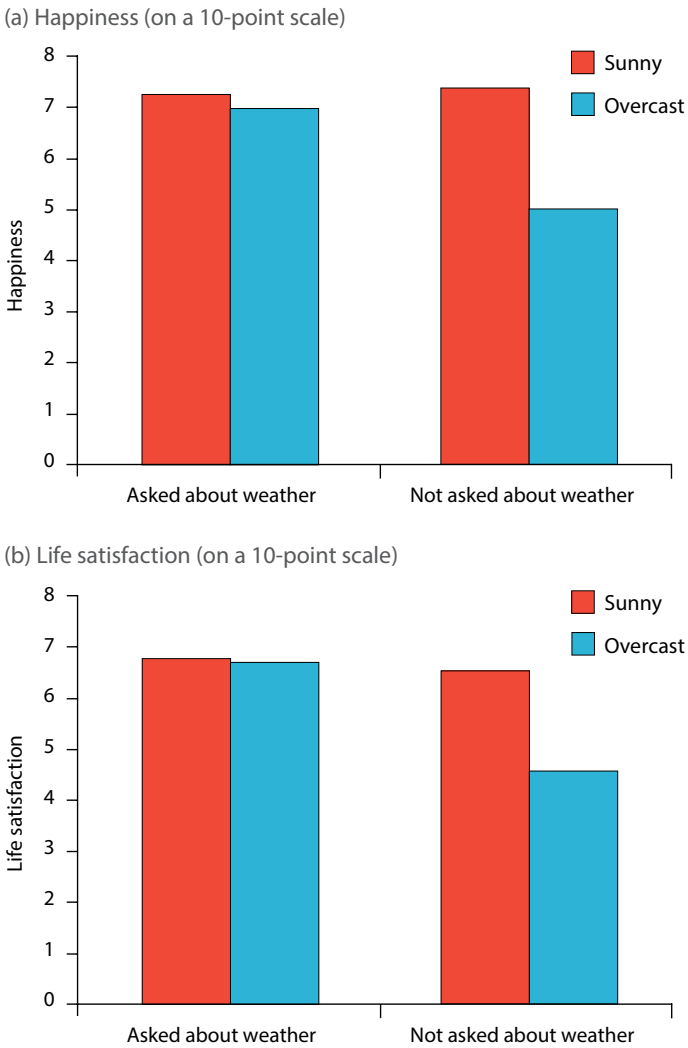

FIGURE 4.18 Use of feelings as information in making social judgements Participants in this study predictably rated their happiness and life satisfaction higher on sunny rather than cloudy days. However, if first asked about the weather, participants were able to attribute their feelings (positive or negative depending on the weather) to the weather and discount them when judging their overall happiness and life satisfaction. The result? Participants in this condition rated their happiness and life satisfaction equally on sunny and cloudy days.

Source: Data from Schwarz and Clore (1983)

There is a wealth of literature making a similar point. For example, the emotion of anger significantly influences social judgements. In many studies, researchers have shown that simply remembering a time in the past when they were angry leads participants to blame others for their problems and to assume that unfair things will happen to them in future events (e.g., DeSteno, Petty, Wegener & Rucker, 2000; Keltner, Ellsworth & Edwards, 1993; Lerner, Goldberg & Tetlock, 1998). Further, being in a bad mood often leads people to rate objects less favourably. For example, people in a bad mood are likely to rate products less favourably, but are also less likely to like politicians and economic policies (Forgas & Moylan, 1987). People who are experiencing a state of fear perceive danger and threat to a greater extent and are more pessimistic (e.g., Lerner & Keltner, 2001). In general, there is much evidence to support the supposition that emotions influence judgement.

Emotions also influence more complex reasoning processes. Specifically, being in a good or bad mood can influence the extent to which people rely on detailed situational information or stereotypes. For example, Bodenhausen, Sheppard and Kramer (1994) found that people who were experimentally induced to experience sadness were less likely to stereotype others than participants who had been induced to feel anger. This does not mean that stereotypes are bad, nor does it mean that being happy makes people take 'shortcuts' and rely on simpler types of

information. Some research on creativity suggests that the emotion of happiness can make people think more flexibly and creatively, coming up, for example, with more novel examples of categories (Ceci & Kumar, 2015; Isen, 1993; Isen, Daubman & Nowicki, 1987). Positive mood can therefore facilitate creativity and openness – characteristics that may be useful in domains such as the workplace; indeed, some findings suggest that mood plays a significant role in workplace creativity (Madjar, Oldham & Pratt, 2002). In general, social psychologists agree that positive mood broadens the way people think, which can have positive consequences for social interaction such as gaining knowledge from others, increasing empathy, building social networks and increasing the positivity of relations between groups (e.g., Fredrickson, 1998, 2001; Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006).

Moral reasoning

Emotions are also important in guiding our moral judgements. In one interesting study, Haidt (2001) showed how people use their emotions to judge whether things are right or wrong. He asked a sample of university students to read a story about a brother and sister who have sex once, while both using birth control. When asked whether the pair did something wrong, most of the participants immediately said 'yes' – a response typically associated with physical expressions of disgust. However, when asked why the behaviour was wrong, participants' responses became less assured. For example, many participants argued that it was wrong because breeding within families is dangerous for genetic reasons, but recall that both parties were said to have used birth control. Subsequently, many participants said that they just 'know that incest is wrong'. Haidt argues that, like many other types of social judgements, moral judgements are often based on gut feelings about what is right and wrong (Greene & Haidt, 2002; Haidt, 2003). People in Haidt's study 'just knew' that incest was wrong but could not necessarily recall or articulate reasons why they had come to this judgement. Instead, the emotional response of disgust probably guided participants' moral judgements about the situation.

Emotions not only guide moral judgement, they can also guide moral behaviour. For example, people often experience shame and guilt for their immoral actions and consequently are more likely to want to make up for those actions (Tangney, Miller, Flicker & Barlow, 1996; Tangney, Wagner, Hill-Barlow, Marschall & Gramzow, 1996). Shame and guilt are not the same thing, and have unique neurological profiles (Bastin, Harrison, Davey, Moll & Whittle, 2016). Shame is more concerned with how one is seen by others, and can be associated with externalization of blame: that is, seeing one's wrongdoing as beyond one's intentional control. For this reason, shame-prone criminal offenders, compared to guilt-prone offenders, appear to be more likely to reoffend (Tangney, Stuewig & Martinez, 2014).

Many studies of emotions and moral judgements have been based on the study of anger and disgust; indeed, these are the most common emotions felt in response to moral violations. However, research has demonstrated that these emotions occur in different domains. Specifically, anger is experienced more in relation to moral violations about rights and freedoms (Rozin, Lowery, Imada & Haidt, 1999; Vasquez, Keltner, Ebenbach & Banaszynski, 2001), whereas disgust is typically related to impurity of body, mind or character (Haidt, Koller & Dias, 1993; Rozin et al., 1999). Disgust in reaction to moral violations that are not physically 'gross' (e.g., a betrayal, rather than an unhygienic behaviour) is hard to disentangle from anger (Russell & Giner-Sorolla, 2013), and may serve more of a communicative function – used by people to intensify their moral disapproval, or to signal their own moral character (Kupfer & Giner-Sorolla, 2017; for a review of moral disgust see Giner-Sorolla, Kupfer & Sabo, 2018).

Moral foundations theory Theory asserting that there are five key moral foundations against which we can judge a person's behaviour (harm/care, fairness, ingroup loyalty, authority and purity).

The emotions of anger and disgust may also be expressed differently in response to violations of different moral principles. According to **moral foundations theory** (Graham, Haidt &

Nosek, 2009; Graham et al., 2013; see Schweder, 1990; Schweder Much, Mahapatra & Park, 1997 for studies of ethics that heavily influenced the theory), there are five key moral foundations against which we can judge a person's behaviour. These are:

- Harm/care: we should care for and avoid harming others; especially the weak or vulnerable.
- Fairness: we should treat others fairly and equitably.
- Ingroup loyalty: we should be loyal to those in our social groups.
- Authority: we should obey and respect leaders and authority figures.
- Purity: we should observe the purity or sanctity of the body and the divine.

Moral foundations theory describes harm/care and fairness as *individualizing* moral foundations since they are supposed to be concerned with the rights and welfare of individuals. On the other hand, it describes ingroup loyalty, authority and purity as *binding* moral foundations since they are concerned with the interests and values of a society (for a critique of this distinction, see Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013). Graham, Haidt and Nosek (2009) argued – and found – that since political liberals (left-wingers) are more concerned with the rights and welfare of individuals than the traditional fabric of society, they would be especially concerned with the individualizing foundations of harm and fairness, and less bothered about violations of ingroup loyalty, authority and purity (see Figure 4.19).

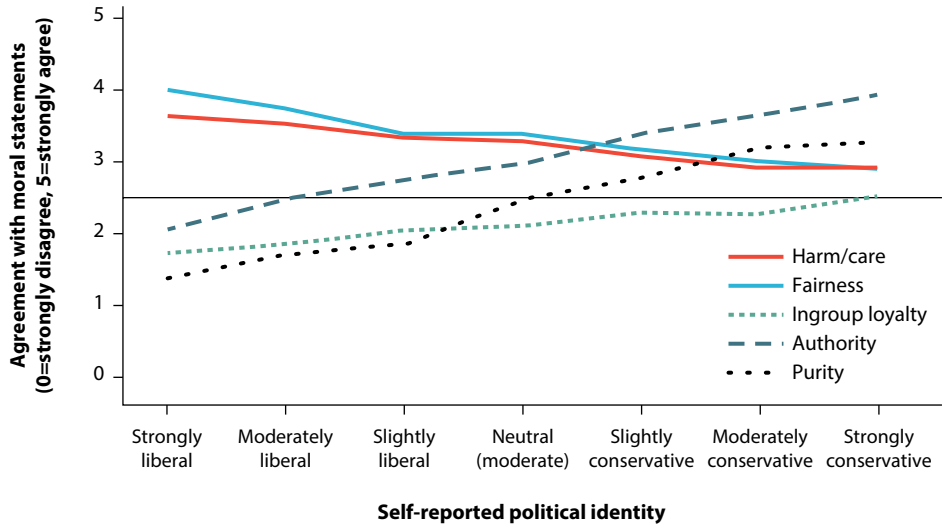

FIGURE 4.19 Relationship between political orientation and moral foundations Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009) found that American liberals (left-wingers) reacted more strongly to violations of the 'individualizing' moral foundations harm and fairness, and less strongly to violations of the binding moral foundations, (ingroup) loyalty, authority and purity. In contrast, American conservatives responded equally to violations of all five foundations, and more strongly than liberals to violations of the 'binding' foundations.

Source: Graham, Haidt & Nosek (2009). Copyright © 2009 by American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

Graham, Haidt and Nosek's (2009) theory and methods have been widely criticized. For example, Kugler, Jost and Noobaloochi (2014) question whether loyalty to the ingroup, authority and to the divine (falling under the purity foundation) should be regarded as moral at all. They found that the relationship between political orientation (left-right) and moral foundations was fully explained by right-wing authoritarianism. Janoff-Bulman and Carnes (2013) criticized the suggestion that harm and fairness are individualizing foundations only concerned with the individual, because they can refer to the harm and fairness done to groups or to society as a whole. Likewise, we would suggest that authority, loyalty and subjective codes of purity can be as divisive as they are binding in any society that has more than one social group. Nonetheless, the theory has generated much research and received a lot of empirical

support. For example, Hofmann, Wisneksi, Brandt, and Skitka (2014) had participants report moral or immoral acts that they witnessed (or perpetrated) in daily life via smartphones. They found that the participants' reports conformed quite well to the moral foundations described by moral foundations theory, and that liberals and conservatives emphasized different moral foundations, much as they do in surveys and laboratory studies (see also Krcmar & Cingel, 2016, for a study of participants' think-aloud moral reasoning during video game play).

EXPLORING FURTHER

You can compete the Moral Foundations Questionnaire online (try https://www.moralfoundations.org/questionnaires). Looking at the questions, do you think they are politically loaded (for critiques, see Gray & Keeney, 2015; Kugler et al., 2014)? For example, do they tend to ask about violations of loyalty to groups, authorities and purity that conservatives specifically would care about? How do you think this might affect their results? Could you design alternative questions that might be less politically biased – or biased in the opposite direction (that is, refer to examples of loyalty, authority and purity that conservatives might care about less than liberals)?

Other traditions of research in moral psychology have explored different styles of moral reasoning. One such distinction, drawn from moral philosophy, is between utilitarian (also known as consequentialist) and deontological moral thinking. In utilitarian moral thinking, the rightness or wrongness of actions is determined by how much harm and benefit they do to people. Acts are right if they yield the best possible ratio between benefit and cost. In consequentialist moral thinking, the rightness or wrongness of actions depends on their conformity to moral rules that should be applied regardless of consequences: as in, 'Thou shalt not kill'. People may typically apply a mix of principles, weighing up the consequences of an action against the rules it may break or follow (Conway & Gawronski, 2013; Gawronski, Armstrong, Conwy, Friesdorf & Hütter, 2017). However, people may sometimes find themselves in a dilemma, where doing the 'right' thing according to deontological rules also means doing harm.

One such dilemma was beautifully described by the philosophers Philippa Foot, and later Judith Thomson (Foot, 1967; Thomson, 1976). Imagine you are at a lever that can divert a tram (trolley) that is on course to strike five people on the tracks. If you do nothing, those five people will die. If you pull the lever to divert the tram, the five people will be spared, but one person on the other track will be struck and killed. You will therefore have killed that person, through your action, in order to save five lives. In deontological ethics, it is not permissible to perform a bad act in order to bring about good consequences, so a thorough deontologist would do nothing in this situation. However, a consequentialist will surely pull the lever, since it is a better outcome for one person to die than five.

This dilemma and carefully crafted variations have been employed in many psychological studies (e.g., Greene, Sommerville, Mystrom, Darley & Cohen, 2001; Navarrete, McDonald, Mott & Asher, 2012; for critical reviews, see Bauman, McGraw, Bartels & Warren, 2014; Kahan, 2015). They generally show that to a surprising degree, most people make the choice that results in the most people dying. That is, in most studies, a majority of participants do not pull the lever, favouring the deontological principle of refraining from committing bad (rule-breaking) acts, even those that bring about better consequences. People who make this deontological choice are rated more favourably by observers (Bostyn & Roets, 2017; Brown & Sacco, 2019; Everett, Pizarro & Crockett, 2016; Sacco, Brown, Lustgraaf & Hugenberg, 2017). Possibly for good reason, as they tend, in fact, to be more empathic than those who pull the lever (Gleichgerrcht & Young, 2013). Hiding one's emotions (Lee & Gino, 2015) and being drunk (Duke & Bègue, 2015) also contribute to utilitarian decisions.

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Check out the Student Project on page 648 by Amelia Henry from Western Sydney University. Amelia studied how 'monosexism' – the belief that people can only be homosexual or heterosexual – affects bisexual identity formation and disclosure. Amelia's experimental work is relevant to the discussions of sexism and gender in this chapter and in Chapter 11. It is also relevant to the study of communication (Chapter 5), relationships (Chapter 7) and identity (Chapter 8).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, we considered the nature of attitudes, attitude formation and attitude change. We distinguished between explicit and implicit attitudes and, finally, we focused on the role of our bodies and emotions in determining our social judgements and behaviours. Specifically, you will have learned that:

- Attitudes are a person's evaluations of various aspects of their social world. They can be positive, negative or ambivalent. They can be distinguished from values and ideologies, but both can affect attitudes.
- Research suggests that attitude strength is determined by their complexity and consistency. Attitudes are formed as a result of four functions: the knowledge function (wanting to make sense of the social world), the utilitarian function (helping us gain rewards and avoid punishments), the value expressive function (allowing us to express our values) and the ego defensive function (protecting us from psychological threats).
- Mere exposure to a person or object can cause an attitude to form. Many attitudes are learned from others through various processes such as classical conditioning, instrumental conditioning and observational learning. Some evidence also suggests that genetic factors play a role in attitude development. Social representations theory asserts that people form attitudes through processes of social interaction.
- People prefer to have harmonious, consistent attitudes and seek to find balance.
- Implicit (unconscious) and explicit (conscious) attitudes can be measured in a variety of ways, such as directly via self-reports, or indirectly via procedures such as the bogus pipeline procedure, the Implicit Association Test and physiological measures. Implicit and explicit attitudes tend to be correlated but differ in several important ways.
- Research is mixed on the ability of attitudes to predict behaviours, and situational factors play a pivotal role in the expression of attitudes (also attitude formation, specificity, values, habits and attitude strength).
- The theory of planned behaviour proposes that people make a decision to behave in a certain way based on a sequence of rational thought processes.
- Cognitive dissonance refers to the unpleasant psychological state that occurs when people notice that their attitudes and behaviours are inconsistent. This appears to be a universal phenomenon and can be likened to the feeling of hypocrisy. People attempt to reduce dissonance in a variety of ways.
- Research on embodied social cognition demonstrates that people's attitudes are influenced by their physical actions, even at the most basic level. People often embody the behaviours of others in their presence by mimicking their actions, which may be a way to facilitate cooperation and empathy.
- Emotions also help guide social judgements. Because many judgements are complex, people often rely on the way they feel in order to make them. Emotions are also important in guiding our moral judgements.

Our concern in this chapter has been on attitudes, emotions and behaviour. In Chapter 5, we turn our attention to the social psychology of communication.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. Describe and evaluate the different methods that social psychologists use to measure attitudes.
2. Describe the concept of cognitive dissonance and, with reference to social psychological research, highlight the ways in which people reduce dissonance.
3. Discuss the role of emotions in making moral judgements.

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Implementation intentions: turning ideas into action

As we saw in this chapter, the link between attitudes and behaviour is statistically robust, but surprisingly weak.

Although attitudes, under the right conditions, will cause us to form appropriate intentions, intentions account for only 20–30 per cent of the variance in behaviour. One of the main reasons for this is that people have good intentions, but fail to act on them (Orbell & Sheeran, 2000). In the past two decades, researchers have found a deceptively simple way to substantially increase the relationship between intentions and actions. This is of interest not only to researchers who are interested in the link between attitudes and behaviour, but also to anyone who wants to gain greater control of themselves and translate their best intentions into action. The technique is called implementation intentions (Gollwitzer, 1993, 1999).

Gollwitzer (1993, 1999) writes that when psychologists (and non-psychologists) think of intentions, they normally think of 'goal intentions'. These take the form 'I intend to reach X', where X is some desired end state. Thus, 'I intend to study hard for the upcoming exam' is a classic goal intention. Implementation intentions are a subtype of these goal intentions. They specify when, where and how the goal will be reached. They take the form: 'When situation X arises, I will perform response Y.' For example: 'When my favourite TV show finishes on Monday night, I will take out my textbook and make notes from Chapter 4.' Theoretically, Gollwitzer expected that implementation intentions would help people achieve their goals in two main ways. First, by specifying a suitable situation in which the response is to be performed, they help a person notice and pay attention to the opportunity to act. Second, by specifying the response that is to be performed, they help people, when the time is right, to act more or less automatically. They do not have to consciously plan their behaviour in the moment, since when they earlier formed an implementation intention, they created a mental representation of the behaviour. In a nutshell, implementation intentions work by 'passing the control of one's behaviour on to the environment' (Gollwitzer, 1993, p. 173). In this way, they are supposed to ironically allow people to intentionally take advantage of the automaticity of human behaviour (which we reviewed in Chapter 3).

Do they work? The answer, in the many studies that have been conducted since then, is generally 'yes'. Implementation intentions have been found to increase goal achievement, sometimes dramatically, in many areas of life (for reviews, see Gollwitzer, 1999; Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2006; Prestwich, Sheeran, Webb & Gollwitzer, 2015). These include intentions: to engage in exercise (Milne, Orbell & Sheeran, 2002; Prestwich, Lawton & Conner, 2003); have cervical cancer screening (Sheeran & Orbell, 2000); improve memory performance for older adults (Chasteen, Park & Schwarz, 2001); comply with speed limits (Elliot, Armitage & Baughan, 2003); reduce disgust reactions (Gallo, McCulloch & Gollwitzer, 2012); reduce implicit prejudice on measures such as a shooter task (see Chapter 11 for a description of this task), the IAT and the GNAT (Mendoza, Gollwitzer & Amodio, 2010; Stewart & Payne, 2008; Webb, Sheeran & Pepper, 2010); and reduce the effects of social anxiety (Webb, Obonaiye, Sheeran, Reidy & Lavda, 2010). Research has largely

supported Gollwitzer's (1999) analysis of how implementation intentions work (e.g., Brandstatter, Lengfelder & Gollwitzer, 2001; Webb & Sheeran, 2007), and has uncovered additional mechanisms. For example, Webb and Sheeran (2007) found that implementation intentions helped participants overcome ego depletion (explored in Chapter 2). Achtziger, Gollwitzer and Sheeran (2008) found that implementation intentions helped shield participants' goals from unwanted thoughts and feelings. Koole and van't Spijker (2000) found that implementation intentions helped participants overcome the planning fallacy (Buehler, Griffin & Ross, 1994), the widespread tendency to underestimate the time it takes to complete a task. Ajzen, Czasch and Flood (2009) found that implementation intentions increased people's feeling of commitment to a task and their conscientious pursuit of its completion.

1. Turn the following goal intentions into implementation intentions that might be applicable in your life:
   - 'I want to revise effectively for an upcoming assignment or exam.'
   - 'I want to break an undesirable habit.'
   - 'I want to get in contact with someone I feel I've been neglecting.'
2. Imagine you are working for *one* of the following:
   - A health agency that wants to promote healthy eating among patients at risk of cardiovascular problems.
   - An environmental agency that wants to promote changes to low-carbon behaviours, such as taking shorter showers and using public transport.
   - A charity that wants to increase self-examination behaviour for breast or testicular cancer.

   Using Google Scholar or another academic database, find papers that review the literature on implementation intentions, and also one or more papers that report applications of implementation intentions to problems similar to the one you have chosen to address. In 400 words or fewer, describe implementation intentions, how they can be useful to the goals of the organization, and suggest how they could be specifically applied.
3. Can you find any papers that suggest that implementation intentions are sometimes no better, or may even backfire, relative to goal intentions?
4. Can you find papers that suggest how the benefits of implementation intentions can be increased?

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources including videos and self-test multiple choice questions to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

Albarracín, D., & Vargas, P. (2010). Attitudes and persuasion: From biology to social responses to persuasive intent. In S.T. Fiske, D.T. Gilbert & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (5th ed, vol. 1, pp. 394–427). New York: Wiley. Provides a perspective on some of the neurological correlates of attitudes, in addition to a broad coverage of research on attitudes.

Banaji, M.R., & Heiphetz, L. (2010). Attitudes. In S.T. Fiske, D.T. Gilbert & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (5th ed, vol. 1, pp. 353–93). New York: Wiley. Provides detailed and comprehensive coverage of research on attitudes.

Gawronski, B., & Hahn. A. (2019). Implicit measures: Procedures, use & interpretation. In H. Blanton, J.M. LaCroix & G.D. Webster (Eds.), *Foundations of social psychological measurement* (pp. 29–55). New York: Taylor & Francis. This chapter provides an introduction to implicit measures, the theoretical meaning of their measurement outcomes, and how they can be used in social psychology.

Maio, G.R., Haddock, G., & Verplanken, B. (2018). *The psychology of attitudes and attitude change* (3rd ed.). London: Sage. Describes how scientific methods have been used to understand attitudes and attitude change.

Niedenthal, P., Krauth-Gruber, S., & Ric, F. (2006). *Psychology of emotion: Interpersonal, experiential, and cognitive approaches*. New York: Psychology Press. Comprehensive look at the importance of emotions, including their measurement, conscious and unconscious processes, and situational and cultural influences.

Semin, G.R., & Smith, E.R. (2008). *Embodied grounding: Social, cognitive, affective and neuroscientific approaches*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Reviews research work on relations of the body to thought, language use, emotions and social relationships.

Walton, G.M., & Wilson, T.D. (2018). Wise interventions: Psychological remedies for social and personal problems. *Psychological Review, 125*, 617–55. An interesting and wide-ranging review that outlines how the principles you have learned about in Chapter 3 and 4 can be put to use in interventions on the way people make sense of their lives. Walton and Wilson argue that if you can ('wisely') help people make more constructive sense of their situation, they will act in ways that help to improve their situation, thus creating a virtuous cycle of positive change.

PART

2 RELATING

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6. Persuasion 242

7. Close relationships 280

CHAPTER

5 COMMUNICATION

This chapter will provide an overview of the social psychology of communication. It will outline the rules of language, and the important social functions of language for identity, culture, cognition, gender and stereotyping. The chapter will also provide an overview of the study of nonverbal communication, conversation and discourse, and will end with a focus on social behaviour in modern communication media. By the end of the chapter, the reader will have a broad understanding of this important topic in social psychology.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Language and its rules
- Language, culture and cognition
- Language, personality, identity and gender
- Language and stereotyping
- Nonverbal communication
- Conversation and discourse
- Communication and technology

Getty Images/Peopleimages

Words matter. They change minds. For example, people's views on abortion change according to whether they are exposed to texts describing a 'foetus' or a not-yet-born 'child' (Mikolajczak & Bilewicz, 2015). Words reveal things about us, including the way we see the world. For example, people whose political views are right-wing tend to use more nouns (e.g., describing a person as 'a Jew' rather than 'Jewish') than those who are left-wing (Cichocka, Bilewicz, Jost, Marrouch & Witkowska, 2016). Word choices like this satisfy psychological needs. Nouns, as compared to verbs or adjectives, suggest that the person or object being described will not change. This appeals to the need for cognitive closure (see Chapters 4 and 11) associated with right-wing ideology (Cichocka et al., 2016). Words can reveal when we are lying. For example, computer programs have been trained to use politicians' word choices to tell their lies apart from their true statements (Bond et al., 2017). Words can also bring us together. When we like someone, or want them to like us, we unconsciously copy their choice of words, and even their grammar (Abrahams, De Fruyt & Hartsuiker, 2018). Words can reveal something about cultures, as well as individuals. For example, Kesebir and Kesebir's (2017) archival study showed that in recent decades, words referring to nature have occurred less and less frequently – revealing a growing disconnect from our natural environment. However, words are far from the only way we communicate. We also use tone of voice, posture and gestures to persuade (Guyer, Fabrigar & Vaughan-Johnston, 2018), to build social bonds (Salazar Kämpf et al., 2018), to lie (Zanette, Gao, Brunet, Bartlett & Lee, 2016), and to tell – or try to tell – when others are lying (Bogaard, Meijer, Vrij & Mercklebach, 2016).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Words can affect our strength and resilience. When people use curse words or 'swear', they are physically stronger (Stephens, Spierer & Katehis, 2018), and can withstand pain for longer (Robertson, Robinson & Stephens, 2017; Stephens, Atkins & Kingston, 2009), although if they swear a lot, in the long run swearing loses some of its painkilling power (Stephens & Umland, 2011). More generally, swearing does not appear to deserve its bad reputation. People who swear more often also tend to be more honest and trustworthy (Feldman, Lian, Kosinski & Stillwell, 2017), and more, rather than less, able to employ a wide vocabulary (Jay & Jay, 2015). However, they are more neurotic (Dewaele, 2017; Jay, 2009) and prone to anger and hostility (Jay & Jay, 2015). Why do you think swearing might make people stronger and more resilient? You could try looking up the articles cited here, but at the time of writing this, researchers are yet to identify a mechanism. One suggestion might be that swearing is a bit like ego depletion (Chapter 3) or drinking alcohol (Chapter 13): if you think it will affect your behaviour in a certain way, it probably will, in a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is, if you think swearing helps you cope, or is associated with strength and toughness, it will probably have that effect for you. How might you test this hypothesis?

Digital Vision/Ariel Skelley

Communication
The transfer of information from one individual to another, or from one group to another.

Communication – the transfer of information from individual to individual, or from group to group – is a topic that rarely has a chapter devoted to it in social psychology textbooks. We think this is a pity, because communication is at the heart of social interaction. Many social psychological phenomena occur through communication. For example, it is through communicating with others that we express our emotions, our thoughts, our intentions and our identities (Chapters 2 and 8), share stereotypes (Chapter 4) and prejudices (Chapter 11), express our desire for justice (Chapter 14), and organize ourselves to make the world more just (Chapter 12). The development and use of language are strongly embedded in cultural and social systems, so there are many social antecedents and consequences of communication. Communication is also fundamentally psychological in that it requires audiences to understand not only what the communicator intends to say literally, but also why they are saying it. For their part, communicators need to anticipate and try to control how their audience perceives their intentions and goals (Holtgraves, 2010). Communication is also vital to the study of social psychology because it is the primary means by which people persuade (Chapter 7) and influence (Chapter 9) others. The study of communication also connects social psychology to other disciplines including linguistics, sociolinguistics, sociology, cognitive psychology, literature and other humanities subjects, and, of course, communication science.

In this chapter, we will consider what language is and the rules that it follows in everyday communication. We will examine how communication is shaped by our culture and how the language we speak can influence what we think. We will talk about some of the ways in which our communication with others reveals important aspects of ourselves, our personalities and our identities. We will discuss how language can be characterized as a 'tool' to communicate beliefs and stereotypes. We will then devote some time to discussing the features of nonverbal communication, conversation and discourse. Finally, we turn to communication in the digital age and how modern media shape our social interactions.

LANGUAGE AND ITS RULES

A **language** is simply a set of sounds (phonemes), structured into meaningful components (morphemes), which are then organized into meaningful units of words, sentences and complete statements or remarks. Within a language, words are the smallest unit of meaning and form the foundations of larger meaningful units such as sentences, paragraphs and whole conversations. The organization of a language depends on different sets of morphological rules on how to structure sounds into words and syntactic rules about how communicators should organize words into sentences that make sense. Further, the meaning of our **utterances**, that is, complete units of speech, is further determined by a set of **semantic rules** so that we, as communicators, can generate language that makes sense to others. Together, these rules make up the **grammar** of a language. Shared knowledge of a language's grammar enables us to communicate meaning to others and understand others' meaning when they communicate with us (Phakiti, De Costa, Plonsky & Starfield, 2018). Language enables us to communicate about almost anything with anyone and is such a powerful social tool that we would be completely lost without it.

Language A set of sounds that convey meaning because they are organized according to a set of rules.

Utterances Complete units of speech in spoken language.

Semantic rules Rules that determine the meaning of sounds and words.

Grammar Collection of morphological, syntactic and semantic rules that govern the production and comprehension of a language.

Grammatical gender Organization of nouns along masculine, feminine and neutral dimensions.

Different languages vary in many ways, including their grammatical rules. For example, some languages have a system that uses **grammatical gender**, where nouns are classified along masculine, feminine and neutral dimensions, which are prefaced with appropriate gendered pronouns. Variations in linguistic features such as grammatical gender can influence the meaning of an utterance. For example, consider the noun 'papa' in Spanish – 'el papa' refers to the pope, 'la papa' refers to a potato, and 'papa' refers to one's father.

Despite these differences, all human cultures have languages with sophisticated rules of grammar. This obviously confers a massive survival advantage. Our use of language allows us to share and accumulate knowledge within families and communities, in ways that no other animal can. It allows us to collectively think about and solve important challenges. Human beings can strategize about fights with other groups before the fight happens, when there are no members of those groups physically present. Similarly, hunting, building, tool making and all sorts of other activities are greatly enhanced by the capacity that language gives us to pass on knowledge and collectively plan and organize ourselves.

With these considerations in mind, some theorists, such as Chomsky (1957; Berwick & Chomsky, 2016), have argued that there is an innate component to language. This *linguistic nativism* hypothesis suggests that the human brain contains a 'hard-wired' set of rules for organizing language (see also Pinker, 1994). It is said that this innate system enables children to learn the rules of language with amazing speed and efficiency. Indeed, it seems that the average two-year-old can produce and comprehend 500 words and a five-year-old as many as 3,000 words (Aitchison, 2003; Holtgraves, 2010). Advocates of this point of view note that it appears to be easy to learn language early in childhood – in the so-called 'critical learning period' – but hard to learn languages later in life, as if the brain were biologically prepared to learn language early on. There is evidence that isolated communities of young children will spontaneously create grammatical languages even when they grow up in the absence of any language. For example, Nicaraguan sign language appears to have been developed by deaf peasant children who had no exposure to sign language and were naturally deprived of language (Senghas & Coppola, 2001). Children who grow up in new territories where immigrants use pidgin – a simplified mixture of languages that lacks rigorous rules of grammar – typically create Creole languages, which retain a mixture of words from different languages but impose a strict grammatical system on them (e.g., Sandler, Meir, Padden & Aronoff, 2005).

However, other theorists argue against the universal grammar hypothesis. They argue that language has adapted to the structure of the human brain – if it is universal, or if people appear to be able to create grammatical languages, this is because language reflects the way thinking processes occur in the brain. That is, the languages we use to talk to each other simply mirror universal features of the way we think to ourselves (Christiansen & Chater, 2008). These critics suggest that there are so many structural departures between languages that the concept of a universal grammar is

unrealistic – languages are just too different (e.g., Lock, 1978, 1980). This perspective also asserts that most of the meaning in language is determined by social context. In a related line of thinking, Corballis (2017) argues that human language evolved largely from primate gestures. What makes us different from other animals is our spectacular evolution of the ability to communicate – of which language is the most remarkable, but not the only, manifestation.

Despite the ongoing debate about how language has evolved, theorists generally agree there are some basic features that allow language to convey meaning. Of particular relevance to social psychology, linguistic researchers and philosophers, such as Austin, Searle and Grice (discussed in the next section), have identified some of the features of language that enable people to communicate meaning to others and also understand the meaning and intentions of others. After all, the primary function of communication is to transfer information to other people, so language needs to be set up to enable people to do so.

Consider the statement: 'I'm here now.' How do we know what this means? At face value, this statement informs the listener about the physical presence of the person making the utterance, but is this always what the person really means? Clearly not – the meaning of an utterance is largely dependent on the context in which it is made and the speaker's intention. How exactly do we understand what people say to us? How do we deal with the ambiguities of a person's language? Also, how do we convey our meaning and intentions to others? The study of these questions is called **pragmatics**.

Pragmatics The distinction between what a speaker's words literally mean and the speaker's intended meaning.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Read about the arguments for and against a 'universal grammar'. What evidence is there to suggest the existence of this? What evidence suggests otherwise? An accessible introduction to this issue can be found in popular author Steven Pinker's 1994 book *The Language Instinct;* while those who want a more technical case can read the Christiansen and Chater (2008) article and the many replies by other scientists that follow in the same issue of *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.

Sometimes, we say things in ways that do not match their literal meaning. Using the above example, 'I'm here now' could be intended as an apology for being late, a reassurance to a sick friend or a boastful announcement of arrival at a meeting. Despite this range of possibilities, listeners are skilled at being able to infer the speaker's intended meaning. Communicators are able to reflect on the context and relevance of utterances in order to understand their meaning and respond accordingly. These skills are obviously important for our everyday social interactions. For a conversation to be successful, communicators need to be able to understand each other.

Speech act theory Theory proposing that speakers use language to perform specific actions.

Locution Non-ambiguous (literal) meaning of an utterance.

Illocution The speech act that is performed by an utterance.

Perlocution The unintended effects of an utterance.

Austin (1962) argued that people are able to separate literal meaning from intended meaning and work out what people intend to say because they have the ability to determine the actions performed by speech. In this **speech act theory**, Austin argued that all language is *performative*, in that it allows people to perform or achieve actions, so that in making statements, we intend something to happen. He argued that there are three characteristics of utterances that enable people to do this:

1. **Locution**: the non-ambiguous or literal meaning of an utterance. In the case of the example 'I'm here now ', the locution is that the person is physically present.
2. **Illocution**: the action performed by the utterance. For example, this may be the apology or the reassurance and reflects the intention of the person making the utterance.
3. **Perlocution**: the utterance may also have unintended consequences. For example, saying 'I'm here now' might make the addressee angry, especially if made in a context where the statement is perceived as boastful or unapologetic.

Austin argued that people are adept at understanding these possibilities but they are also able to accurately distinguish the speaker's meaning. Further developing speech act theory, Searle (1975) argued that it is sufficient to use **indirect language** to convey meaning. That is, people do not even need to say approximately what they mean to say for them to be understood. For example, if you have ever seen a sign stating 'This is a no smoking area', you are able to understand, even though it is an indirect statement, that you are not permitted to smoke there. In general, people are able to interpret the intentions of others despite the apparent indirectness of their speech (Figure 5.1). In most cases, when people have mastered a language, indirect speech acts are as effective as those that are direct. People search for meaning in utterances and are generally good at finding the correct, intended meaning, even quite early in childhood (Bosco & Gabbatore, 2017). But how is it that people can distinguish between what is said and what is meant? Of course, the context is important; as we will discuss next, the philosopher H. Paul Grice (1975, 1989) argued that communicators also follow certain cooperative 'rules' when they speak to one another.

Indirect language Use of language in which the intended meaning is not stated explicitly yet is commonly understood.

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FIGURE 5.1 The power of indirect language This signage has only two words, 'Private parking', and yet people know what they are not supposed to do in this area. The sign communicates meaning in an indirect but effective manner. The study of pragmatics helps us to understand how people are able to comprehend seemingly ambiguous combinations of words and indirect requests.

Grice and the cooperative principle

Grice (1975) devised the **theory of conversational implicature**, in which he argued that speakers tend to be cooperative when they talk. Specifically, communicators mean more than they say because they mutually adhere to what is known as the **cooperative principle**. In Grice's words (1975), speakers should aim to make their 'conversation contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged' (p. 45). In other words, people should communicate in ways that are consistent with the context and topic being discussed – they need to follow rules that make it work. Grice argued that there are four rules, which he called *maxims* of communication:

Theory of conversational implicature Grice's theory argues that people are able to understand each other and communicate effectively because they follow various 'rules' of conversation.

Cooperative principle The principle that people follow a set of rules that enable communication to function effectively.

1 Quantity: communicators make their contribution to the conversation as informative as required for the current purpose of the exchange but do not make their contributions more informative than required.

2. Quality: communicators generally attempt to make their contributions true, do not say things they know to be false, and do not say things for which they lack adequate evidence.
3. Relation: communicators aim to only say things that are relevant.
4. Manner: communicators aim to be clear and straightforward and avoid ambiguity.

Grice argued that conversation generally works because people follow these basic rules of communication. We are able to understand others and others are able to understand us because we hold the same assumptions about the rational and efficient nature of talk. These principles guide our conversations with others and we can understand what people intend to say because we assume they also follow the Gricean rules of communication.

There are, however, always exceptions to the rule. Sometimes, people break the rules in a subtle fashion and at other times, they openly flout them. Crucially, people tend to mutually assume everyone will adhere to the cooperative principle and the four Gricean maxims, so this assumption assists the receiver to interpret the speaker's utterances. Specifically, they will assume that the communicator intended to be clear, relevant, truthful and informative, and interpret the meaning based on these principles. When a communicator violates the cooperative principle in some way, this influences the receiver's interpretation of what they say.

Consider the example of a university student complaining about the work being too difficult, and receiving the lecturer's response: 'Well, this is a university.' This flouts the maximum of quantity (it is obviously a university, so it was not necessary for the lecturer to say this), but the meaning of this statement can be clearly understood despite – or rather *because* – of the violation of the rule. In this case, flouting a Gricean maxim tells the student exactly what the lecturer means (that is, university work is meant to be difficult), with a slight touch of sarcasm. Indeed, flouting maxims can be a powerful way for communicators to convey implicit meaning in everyday social interactions.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Look at the examples below – can you identify which maxim is being violated in each example? Can you tell what the respondent (B) was trying to communicate in each case? Examples like these demonstrate our ability to understand conversation that violates basic rules of communication and how important it is to break certain rules of conversation in order to get some messages across.

A: What happened to that cheese I put on the table?

B: The dog looks happy.

A: I hear you went to a concert last night. How was the lead singer?

B: She produced a series of sounds corresponding closely to the score of the song 'Dancing Queen'.

A: I bought a new tie.

B: The scissors are in the drawer.

A: Have you seen my car keys?

B: I've seen them on the hook, next to the fridge and also in the door lock.

A: Where did you go today?

B: Somewhere nice.

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

The logic of conversation in survey design

Grice's theory has been influential in social psychology (see also *relevance theory:* Sperber & Wilson, 1986). Social psychology studies involve communication between researchers and participants, and participants' responses occasionally reflect the pragmatics of the situation rather than the interpersonal or intergroup phenomena the studies are designed to test (Holtgraves, 2010). For example, if given a piece of information in an experiment, participants may use the information simply because they assume it is relevant. However, in such experiments, the researcher may precisely be interested in whether or not the information is used and the conversational dynamics of the situation hinder the researcher's objective (see Hilton and Slugoski, 2001).

Schwarz (2014; see also Schwarz, Groves & Schuman, 1998; Schwarz, Strack, Hilton & Naderer, 1991) has further elaborated on this issue, arguing that surveys and questionnaires are like conversations between researchers and participants. Like other conversations, surveys are governed by the cooperative principle – respondents answer honestly, clearly and give as much detail as is required, and they expect that the researcher does the same. To give an example of the impact this can have, Schwarz, Knauper, Hippler, Noelle-Neumann and Clark (1991) found that when asked how successful their lives had been, 34 per cent of respondents rated their lives as very successful when asked to respond on a scale from –5 to +5. However, only 13 per cent reported having very successful lives when the scale was from 1 to 10. It was argued that respondents' assumptions about what the numbers mean (e.g., that negative numbers must mean negative events) influence the responses. Participants were probably making the assumption in one case that the researcher wanted to know about the presence of negative events, but in the other that the researcher wanted to know only about the presence of positive events. Respondents therefore answered according to the assumptions they drew about the researcher's objectives.

Haberstroh, Oyserman, Schwarz , Kühnen and Ji (2002) demonstrated that this type of effect also depends on the way in which people construe the self. In one experiment, participants were asked to complete what they thought was a language comprehension task. In fact, this was a priming task where one group of participants was primed with the concept of independence by reading words such as 'I' and 'me' and another group was primed with the concept of interdependence by reading words such as 'we' and 'our'. Participants were then asked to rate their happiness and life satisfaction. However, at this point, one group of participants answered both questions together at the end of one questionnaire, whereas the other group answered them in two separate questionnaires. Haberstroh et al. predicted that participants in the interdependence condition would be more sensitive to the redundancy of the happiness and satisfaction questions than those in the independence condition, because they would be more attuned to the requirement of cooperative conversational conduct. Specifically, because they have been primed as interdependent with others, they should pay closer attention to the common ground of the conversation. However, it was argued that this redundancy would only be noticed when both questions were presented closely together in the same questionnaire. Hence, interdependence-primed participants should provide different information in response to the two questions, resulting in a lower correlation between answers in the one-questionnaire condition. Independence-primed participants should not be as sensitive to the redundancy issue, and the correlations between their answers should be same in both conditions. Indeed, this is what the results revealed (Figure 5.2).

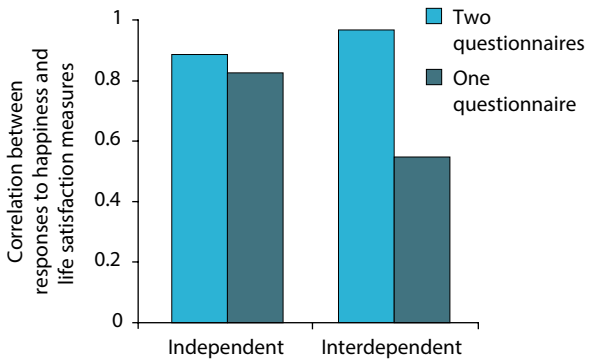

FIGURE 5.2 Questionnaire design influences how participants respond Self-construal level influences participants' attention to redundancy in questionnaires. When individuals are primed with interdependence, they are more likely to notice the redundancy in asking two similar questions and attempt to provide new information, perhaps because they think this is what the experimenter must want. So, when redundant questions appear close together in the questionnaire, the correlation between the answers is attenuated for interdependence-primed participants relative to participants primed with independence.

Source: Data from Haberstroh et al. (2002), Experiment 1

Questions

1. Imagine you were working for a market research company commissioned to do a customer satisfaction survey by a cosmetics company. These companies regularly provide results of such surveys in their advertisements (e.g., '80 per cent of women were satisfied with this product'). Imagine, also, that you had no moral scruples. How would you design questions to lead customers to provide apparently positive evaluations of the product?
2. Using an Internet search engine or academic database, can you find a paper that criticizes a scale in social or personality psychology on the basis of Schwarz's (2014) analysis of survey design?

The examples we have considered emphasize the cooperative nature of communication. According to Grice (1975) and many other theorists, communication is fundamentally cooperative. This must be so from the evolutionary perspectives we have considered, since they claim that our communicative abilities have benefited the entire species. Even arguments or verbal 'fights' are essentially cooperative in the sense that in order for one side to 'win', each side has to work together to make themselves understood. However, Grice's (1975) theory has been criticized for overemphasizing the cooperative nature of communication (e.g., Mey, 1987; Sarangi & Slembrouck, 1992). Sometimes, people really have no interest in understanding each other, and make verbal statements to express their values or emotions, or to insult those who disagree. This frequently seems to be the case in online forums. For example, August and Liu (2017) examined online discussions about race-related statements made by the New Zealand television presenter Paul Henry. As well as finding a lot of explicit and implicit racism in the online communication, August and Liu (2017) observed that Grice's maxims were seldom followed, and combatants in online forums often left without reaching any agreement, agreement to disagree or clarification whatsoever of their position. When people are strongly enough opposed, and have no interest in understanding each other, their communication may not follow cooperative norms.

Politeness Processes by which communicators frame their conversations in order to save the face of their interlocutors.

As we have seen, the rules of language are powerful in many different ways. However, breaking the rules can be powerful too. Another way we slightly break the rules of communication is in our conversations about 'delicate' matters, when we adopt **politeness** strategies – phrasing utterances as a function of particular social concerns.

Politeness

Some things are not easy to communicate. Imagine trying to tell a friend that they smell bad, or perhaps you can remember an occasion where you needed to confront someone you thought was telling a lie. These are not easy situations to deal with and a certain level of delicacy is often required. Indeed, in social interactions, what people say to others can make or break their relationships, so as communicators, it is important to know what and how to say things so that social relationships are maintained.

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) argued that people manage these types of situation through the use of politeness strategies. They devised a theory of politeness phenomena and argued that in communication, a great deal of difference between what is said and what is implied can be attributed to politeness. To explain, Brown and Levinson referred to the notion of **face** (Goffman, 1959). A person's face is like their self-esteem. You may have heard the expression 'to save face', referring to the basic human need to maintain a positive sense of how one is viewed by others. In everyday social situations, face is often

Face People's concern about their value or standing in the eyes of others.

put at risk. Even in basic social interactions where people respond to simple requests, such as being asked for the time, face is put at risk because the person on the receiving side of the request has to go out of their way to do something for someone else. When we communicate such requests to other people, we typically attempt to compensate for these threats to face by being polite. For example, if we want to ask a stranger for the time, we may use a question like 'Excuse me, please could you tell me the time?' rather than 'Give me the time'. The first request is clearly more polite and saves the recipient from experiencing feelings of awkwardness.

Face comes in two varieties:

1. **Positive face**: a person's wish to be well thought of. It is the desire to be understood, liked and treated nicely. Threats to this kind of face can be particularly harmful. For example, a complaint about the quality of a person's work is a threat to their positive face (see Hastings & Castle Bell, 2018, for more detail on different kinds of positive face).
2. **Negative face**: a person's wish not to be bothered and to go about one's business unimpeded. Thus, telling someone there is a long wait in the doctor's surgery is a threat to negative face.

Positive face
A person's wish to be regarded positively.

Negative face
A person's wish to have freedom to act.

Because these threats to face feel unpleasant, our utterances are often oriented to the positive or negative face of those we interact with. To counteract threats to positive face, we might use expressions of solidarity like 'Got the time, mate?', whereas to deal with threats to negative face, we might use expressions of restraint such as 'Could I perhaps just ask you what the time is?' Alternatively, we can go 'off record' and use indirect approaches such as 'Oh dear, I've left my watch at home!' These types of utterances can be just as powerful as direct language and research has demonstrated that these strategies are often judged to be more polite than direct strategies (e.g., Francik & Clark, 1985; Gibbs, 1986; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990). Clearly, we have many options to deal with threats to face and you may be able to think of many different examples of how you use polite language in your everyday social interactions.

Brown and Levinson (1978) studied the languages of three different cultures, Tamil (southern India), Tzeltal (spoken by Mayan people in Mexico) and British/American English, and argued that there are distinct universals in politeness phenomena. It appears that, universally, communicators tend to assess the 'burden' of the request on the addressee and as the burden increases, so does the level of politeness. However, the use of politeness strategies is not the same for every person we deal with. It differs depending on the status differential in the interaction and what is expected. For example, research suggests that less powerful individuals are more likely to use negative politeness (indirect) strategies when they are making requests to more powerful individuals (Brown & Gilman, 1989; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990). Further, people in higher positions of power are less likely to display politeness in conversations (Holtgraves & Yang, 1990, 1992; Leichty & Applegate, 1991; Lim & Bowers, 1991) and this effect has been demonstrated cross-culturally (Ambady, Koo, Lee & Rosenthal, 1996; Holtgraves & Bonnefon, 2017; Holtgraves & Yang, 1992).

Further, the 'closeness' of the relationship between the addresser and the addressee can sometimes predict the use of politeness strategies – less politeness is used in closer relationships (Brown, 1993; Johnstone, Ferrara & Bean, 1992). However, one important boundary condition for politeness strategies to be used at all is that the relationship between the addresser and the addressee is generally positive (Slugoski & Turnbull, 1988). Statements are judged less polite when the dyadic (two-person) relationships are negative, and in positive relationships even indirect insults are interpreted as being more polite. Finally, people who are

in sad moods tend to prefer greater politeness than people in happy moods (Forgas, 1999). Brown (1965) postulated a **universal norm** of politeness and formality in communication behaviour, which, in the intervening five decades, has not been contradicted by evidence. The universal norm is that we use more formal, polite forms of address when communicating with people higher than us in a social hierarchy, and those who we do not know very well. Thus, across human cultures, language appears to convey and reinforce social hierarchy and social distance. Brown and Levinson's model of politeness inspired a lot of research, and this research has generally supported the theory (for a nuanced review, see Holtgraves & Bonnefon, 2017).

Universal norm The culturally universal tendency to use more formal, polite language with people who are higher in status than ourselves, or higher in social distance from ourselves.

Now that we know a bit more about language and the 'rules' of communication, and how people actively interpret what we say, we will move on to the effects our language can have on our own cognitions.

LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND COGNITION

It has been argued that language has significant power over people's thoughts. This perspective on language was made famous by the anthropologist Benjamin Whorf (for a review, see Fiedler, 2008). In its extreme form (**linguistic determinism**), this argument posits that language entirely determines thought. In its more moderate and commonly adopted form (**linguistic relativity**), the argument posits that language shapes thought. As such, people who speak different languages see the world in different ways (Whorf, 1956). To give an example, the English language has a linear conception of time (e.g., days/hours/minutes) and any point in time is a point on a linear timeline, but the Native American Hopi language lacks a tense system. So do Hopi and English speakers have a different experience of time?

Linguistic determinism The argument that language determines thought.

Linguistic relativity The argument that language shapes thought.

Some research suggests they might: language appears to provide a system of cultural meaning that changes the way we think. For example, Hong, Chiu and Kung (1997) exposed 'westernized' Hong Kong Chinese students either to images common in Chinese culture (e.g., dragons), or to neutral perspective drawings. After exposure to the Chinese drawings, participants were found to endorse traditional Chinese values to a greater extent and they also made more internal attributions than participants who viewed neutral pictures. It was argued that the drawings activated a cultural meaning system, which determined how the participants perceived the world around them. Studying the effects of language more directly, Earle (1969) found that bilingual Chinese students were less dogmatic (on responses to a dogmatism scale) when they responded to the scale in English as opposed to when they responded in Chinese. Similarly, Bond (1983) found that bilingual Hong Kong Chinese students endorsed 'Western' values more when they responded to a questionnaire in English than students who completed the questionnaire in Cantonese. Further, Ramírez-Esparza, Gosling, Benet-Martínez, Potter and Pennebaker (2006) demonstrated this **cultural frame switching** in relation to personality. They asked Spanish-English bilinguals to respond to a scale of the Big Five personality characteristics (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) either in Spanish or English. They found that across three bilingual samples, extraversion scores were higher in English than in Spanish (see Figure 5.3). Similar findings were uncovered for the traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness. Wang, Shao and Li (2010) found that bilingual adolescents in Hong Kong were more collectivistic when answering questions in Chinese and more individualistic when answering questions in English (see Chapter 2). Schwartz et al. (2014) found that bilingual Hispanic migrants living in Miami reported

Cultural frame switching Because languages are learned in different cultural settings, different knowledge structures are learned and this influences thought.

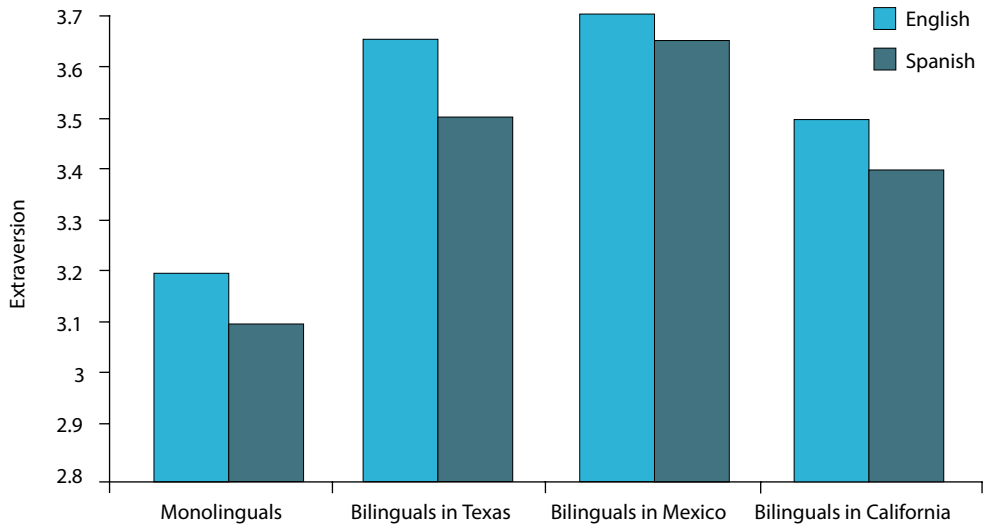

FIGURE 5.3 Cultural frame switching Findings demonstrate that Spanish-English bilinguals can show different personalities when using different languages. Here, participants scored higher on the trait of extraversion when they responded to a questionnaire in English than in Spanish.

Source: Data from Ramírez-Esparza et al. (2006)

following more US cultural practices and being more individualistic when answering in English than in Spanish. However, not all of Schwartz et al.'s findings were consistent with the cultural frame switching hypotheses: on other measures, migrants reported being *less* collectivistic when answering in Spanish.

Does language entirely determine thought? Most theorists would say not, taking a moderate perspective on the issue (e.g., Hoffman, Lau & Johnson, 1986; Lindquist, Satpute & Gendron, 2015; Lucy, 2016). These theorists tend to argue that language allows people to communicate more easily about aspects of the world that are important (Krauss & Chiu, 1998). It is clear that people live in complex, continually changing environments and in order to survive in such environments, they need to act in a coordinated, cooperative way. To do this, people need a shared focus, when required, on a discrete subset of goal-relevant objects and events. This is where language becomes important. Like a 'lens', language directs the joint focus of senders' and recipients' attention, thought and memory. In this sense, it constrains the reality that people experience (Sutton, 2010).

The focusing, lens-like power of language is often obvious, as in the statement 'There's a car coming', which focuses the listener's attention. At other times, however, it is more subtle. **Masculine generic language** is a good example. Here, linguistic convention in English has long had it that masculine terms, such as 'man', 'his' and the collective noun 'man', can be used to represent people in general, irrespective of gender, to refer to 'person', 'his or her' and 'humanity', respectively (Martin & Papadelos, 2017). Nonetheless, Ng (1990) showed that participants who had been presented with these masculine generic terms did not encode them in this gender-neutral way. Rather, a subsequent memory test showed that they had encoded the masculine generic as referring to men *and not women*. This result suggests that male individuals will tend to be seen as the ones who contribute 'manpower', who are responsible for the achievements of 'mankind' and so on. Technically, people should think of individuals of both genders when the masculine generic is used, but of course, they do not, since words like 'man' and 'his' are often used to refer only to males, and so are associated with them.

Masculine generic language Use of masculine words such as 'man' and 'mankind' to represent people in general.

Ng's (1990) work shows that masculine generic language is not merely a technical quirk but has ideological meaning. Indeed, people are more approving of masculine generic language (Douglas & Sutton, 2014), and less likely to make an effort to avoid it (Sczesny, Moser & Wood, 2015), if they are sexist or approve of unequal social hierarchies. Research does suggest, however, that many people are willing and able to change their language either by neutralizing (e.g., using gender-neutral pronouns like 'they', or titles) or by feminizing it (e.g., saying 'he or she' to include both genders). For a discussion of the merits and pitfalls of each strategy, see Gabriel, Gygax, and Kuhn (2018).

Relations between other groups are also affected by this lens-like power of language. Of particular importance are the words that people use to denote groups. Of course, some of these verbal labels are derogatory, as in 'fags', whereas others are neutral or positive, as in 'gays', Carnaghi & Maass, 2007). O'Dea and Saucier (2017) presented people with various labels to describe Black people in the US. As the labels became more offensive, they were rated both as more descriptive (meant to refer to someone's ethnicity), more negatively expressive (meant to convey negative emotion) and less positively expressive (meant to convey positive emotion). This suggests that relatively low-intensity ethnic labels may be seen to convey closeness or humour, but as the ethnic labels become stronger, they are less ambiguous: you mean to refer to someone's ethnicity and to convey hostility. The labels we use to describe groups may focus attention not just on those groups, but how we feel about them (see also Leader, Mullen & Rice, 2009; Mullen, Calogero & Leader, 2007).

Saying is believing effect
The tendency for a person's memory of individuals, groups or events to be influenced by what they have said about them.

Another way in which language shapes cognition is in the **saying is believing effect** (e.g., Bebermeier Echterhoff, Bohner & Hellmann, 2015; Echterhoff, Higgins & Levine, 2009; Hausmann, Levine & Higgins, 2008; Pierucci, Echterhoff, Marchal & Klein 2014). This effect occurs when the act of describing persons or groups changes how we feel about them. If we are induced to describe a group in positive terms (for example, because we believe our audience likes that group), we are later likely to feel more positively toward them. The saying is believing effect tends to grow over time. Attributing negative traits to a group creates, in memory, an association between the group and those traits. If you have just made the negative comments, you will remember them clearly and realize that they contribute to your negative feelings about the group. If you made the comments some weeks ago, you are less likely to recall exactly what you said and why. Thus, the negative mental associations seem attributable to the group itself, rather than what you have said about it. The general point made by the saying is believing effect is crucial for understanding the language-cognition interface – our language changes how we, as well as our audiences, think (for reviews, see Fiedler, 2008; Hausmann et al., 2008; Holtgraves & Kashima, 2008).

EXPLORING FURTHER

The saying is believing effect is closely linked to the phenomenon of audience tuning – the process of communicating a message in such a way that matches the audience's pre-existing beliefs on a particular issue. Findings suggest that once people have 'tuned' to their audience and are later asked to recall their attitudes, they recall attitudes that are more consistent with the audience's perspective, that is, the communicator believed what they said even if it was not what they believed before (for a review, see Echterhoff et al., 2009). The saying is believing effect is therefore relevant to a variety of social domains. Specifically, can you find any evidence of saying is believing effects in realms such as politics?

LANGUAGE, PERSONALITY, IDENTITY AND GENDER

Language is a useful vessel to us for another reason – people can infer things about us from *what* we say. As discussed in the previous section, what people say can convey to recipients something about a speaker's thoughts and beliefs. However, *how* people say what they say can also be a useful source of information for receivers. In other words, our language use can convey 'clues' or **social markers** to receivers about who we are, what we are feeling and what we are thinking (Scherer & Giles, 1979).

Social markers Features of language use that convey information about a speaker's characteristics.

Personality

First, listeners often make inferences about a speaker's personality characteristics from their language use. A typical experiment to examine inferences about personality dimensions utilizes the **matched guise technique**, where speech characteristics are manipulated experimentally and participants are asked to evaluate the speaker along dimensions such as competence and sociability. Findings have generally shown that rapid speech rates are associated with high ratings of competence, sociability and trustworthiness, while long, silent pauses are associated with low ratings of competence. Utterance length is associated with ratings of dominance. Finally, elevated social pitch is associated with perceptions of deceit and emotional instability, but variability in vocal pitch is associated with perceived dynamism and extraversion (Scherer, 1979; for a review, see Krauss & Chiu, 1998). Men, but not necessarily women, who speak with lower pitched voices are seen as more trustworthy and dominant (Tsantani, Belin, Paterson & McAleer, 2016). Correlational research shows that politicians (who of course are mostly men) with deeper voices are more successful in elections, but do not make better leaders (Klofstad & Anderson, 2018).

Matched guise technique Technique used to measure attitudes about a speaker based on the speaker's language use.

Identity

Many researchers have investigated how language use can provide an indication of a person's social class and status. George Bernard Shaw popularized public awareness about this issue in his play *Pygmalion* (later adapted into the musical *My Fair Lady*), in which he depicted a young cockney flower seller with 'kerbstone English' that would probably 'keep her in the gutter for the rest of her days' (Shaw, [1916]1951, p. 28). Indeed, Shaw was right in some ways – people can infer a lot about us from how we speak. Speakers know this and will often go to great lengths to change the way they speak and conceal their origins, as was the case for Eliza Doolittle in Shaw's play, who became a 'project' to a professor of phonetics.

The most significant indicator of social status is at the phonological level, that is, one's accent. Perceived class variations in accents seem to occur in most societies (Guy, 1988). Research demonstrates that varieties in speech communities can be ordered on a continuum of 'prestige' and that speakers' evaluations reflect this ordering (Bradac, 1990; Giles & Coupland, 1991). In the UK, for example, regional accents and those from urban areas, such as Birmingham's 'Brummie' accent and London's cockney accent, tend to be associated with lower ratings of social class. In general, speakers who deviate from the more standard, or **received pronunciation (RP)**, accents tend to be judged less favourably than middle-class speakers (Giles, 1970; Giles & Powesland, 1975). People are able to rate socioeconomic status quickly and accurately. For example, Ellis (1967) asked participants to judge the social status of recorded voices and they were able to rate the speaker's socioeconomic status with remarkable accuracy. They could even do so based on hearing a speaker count from 1–10. The advent of new digital techniques

Received pronunciation (RP) Standard, high status spoken accent.

for linguistic analysis has made it possible to examine the influence of various linguistic markers on person perception. Typically, findings suggest that standard speakers are rated as more confident, competent and intelligent than non-standard speakers, but that non-standard speakers fare better on ratings of solidarity dimensions such as friendliness and generosity (Marlow & Giles, 2008; Ryan, Giles & Sebastian, 1982). One reason for this is that people find non-standard (accented or regional) speakers harder to understand (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016). The more easily we can perceive something or someone, the more we tend to like them – this process also may help explain the mere exposure effect, as we saw in Chapter 4.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Research suggests that regional and urban speakers may be rated less favourably on measures of social status. Can you find any evidence that this is not always the case? For example, how are people with regional and urban accents rated on dimensions such as friendliness and trustworthiness?

Although people may be stigmatized by the language they use, it is difficult for people to change the way they speak. Equally importantly, people may not *want* to do so. If an individual is proud of their ethnicity, they may be more motivated to maintain aspects of their language and linguistic style that mark this identity. For example, an Indian person who has lived in Britain for 20 years may still speak with a strong Indian accent, partly because it is difficult to change one's accent, but partly because speaking with an ethnically marked accent means that the person can maintain an important social identity (see Chapter 8). Further, interactions between groups can influence linguistic behaviour.

Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) devised the concept of *ethnolinguistic vitality*, arguing that differences in group status and support for a language can determine the continued use, and sometimes even the survival, of a language in a particular social context. Sometimes, languages cease to be used among groups who live away from their first country. One example is third-generation Japanese people residing in Brazil, who have all but lost their Japanese linguistic culture (Kanazawa & Loveday, 1988). The Japanese language suffered in this context arguably because it had low ethnolinguistic vitality. However, in some cases, this lack of status and support can encourage the revival of dying languages. For example, Hebrew and Welsh have both seen a resurgence (Fishman, 1989). Competence in the language is also an important predictor of its survival (Coupland, Bishop, Evans & Garrett, 2006). The survival of a language may also depend on people's motivation to encourage, or even enforce, its use: people who deviate from their local ethnic dialects in favour of an alternative may be seen as 'traitors' to their identity (Belavadi & Hogg, 2016).

Speech accommodation theory Theory asserting that people modify their speech style in conversations to suit the context.

It is the case, however, that people linguistically adapt to their environment. At a general level, people tend to adapt their speech style to the context in which they are placed. **Speech accommodation theory** asserts that people will make adjustments to their speech style based on who they are speaking to and the motives involved in the communication (Giles & Smith, 1979; Giles, Coupland & Coupland, 1991; Giles, Taylor & Bourhis, 1973). For example, try to remember a time when you spoke to someone who had a different

accent. After a while you may have noticed your speech style changing and becoming more like your listener's, and their speech style may have been doing the same thing and becoming more like yours. This is an example of speech accommodation and can result from a variety of motives, such as trying to be better understood or wanting to be liked by the communication partner.

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Occasionally, people will converge their speech to their listener's, as in the above example. This process of **speech convergence** typically occurs when two friends converse. Speech convergence increases the extent to which the communication partners' speech styles are similar. In turn, this increases the partners' liking and approval of one another (Bourhis, Giles & Lambert, 1975). It is perhaps not suprising that extraverts are more likely to show speech convergence (Kurzius, 2015). In a similar way, lower status individuals may shift their speech style to be more like a higher status individual's (and vice versa) to equalize the conversation, again promoting liking.

Speech convergence
Speech-style shift towards that of the listener.

In other interactions, a different picture emerges. For example, in a situation where two groups have a less than positive relationship, their speech patterns might diverge. This **speech divergence** can serve to maintain a group's distinctiveness from the other. This divergence is particularly prominent in situations where a lower status group has the perception that they can linguistically 'pass' for members of the high status group. While the former will attempt to converge to the higher status speech style, the latter will diverge in order to maintain its distinctiveness from the lower status group. However, in other cases where linguistic vitality is high (e.g., Welsh speakers in the UK), the minority group is likely to diverge to accentuate their distinctive accent and the identity it embodies (Bourhis & Giles, 1977; Giles & Coupland, 1991). This use of language is sometimes self-conscious, and is often contentious and political. On the other hand, those speaking with regional, distinctive accents often confront, and themselves generate, the criticism that they 'won't get ahead speaking like that!' People understand both the benefits, and the potential downsides, of speaking with distinctive minority accents that may not confer high status in wider society (Belavadi & Hogg, 2016; Marlow & Giles, 2010).

Speech divergence
Speech-style shift away from that of the listener.

There is widespread evidence for speech accommodation processes. Even Queen Elizabeth II's English accent has been found to change over the years, moving from an extremely upper-class RP accent to a more standard RP accent (Harrington, 2006). More recently, speech accommodation theory has been extended to include accommodation in nonverbal behaviours too. Renamed **communication accommodation theory** or sometimes just 'accommodation theory', it is argued that people converge and diverge on a range of behaviours associated with language (Coupland, 2010; Giles & Ogay, 2007; Giles, Mulac, Bradac & Johnson, 1987). We will talk more about nonverbal communication later in this chapter.

Communication accommodation theory Extension of speech accommodation theory, asserting that: people modify their speech style and nonverbal behaviours in conversations to suit the context.

Gender

Researchers have also been interested in speech differences related to gender. However, these are often quite complex and difficult to interpret. For example, there are significant differences in the vocal pitch of female and male speakers, but the extent to which this relates to anatomy or social factors is difficult to determine. However, within vocal register ranges, women tend to use the middle part of the register, whereas men favour the lower part of the register (Krauss & Chiu, 1998). Re, O'Connor, Bennett and Feinberg (2012) used digital technology to alter the frequency (depth) of voices by small steps of 2Hz. They found evidence that women prefer men who speak with a lower voice – up to a point (women do not prefer very deep men's voices to slightly less deep voices). On the other hand, men in their study preferred women with ever higher voices; digitally heightening the pitch of even very high women's voices made them more appealing. Findings like this raise interesting and complex questions about whether the actual and desired pitch of the human voice is affected by gender stereotypes and ideology. There is some suggestive evidence: a longitudinal, archival study making use of recordings of Australian women's voices between 1945 and 1993 showed that they became deeper. Over this period, women's societal status improved. The change coincides with changes in women's societal status, providing some indication that speech may be influenced by gender and gender roles (Pemberton, McCormack & Russell, 1998; Russell, Penny & Pemberton, 1995). In general, however, this is a neglected topic – a blind spot in social psychology.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Interpreting the results of studies of vocal pitch and social change is difficult, partly because research has been essentially correlational (e.g., in Australia there is a negative correlation between time and pitch of women's voices, which coincides with increasing gender equality in that society). Let us try a simple experiment to shed light on this 'blind spot' in social psychology. You will need to coopt two friends or family members for a simple, less controlled demonstration. Think of five powerful sentences, such as 'I am strong', 'Do what I tell you', and five powerless sentences, such as 'I am weak', 'I will do what you tell me'. Write them down. Have one person read these sentences out carefully and in as natural a style as possible. Have another person listen to each sentence and rate on a 10-point scale how high or low pitched the sentence was; it is crucial, of course, that neither the speaker nor the rater knows what you expect to find or what the independent variable is. Does the speaker use a higher pitch for the powerless sentences? Of course, a problem with this experiment is that the rater may have an implicit belief that powerlessness is associated with high pitch. Can you think of a simple solution to this problem? And can you think of more controlled experiments you could do, if you had the resources, to test the effects of gender roles and power on pitch of speech?

This raises interesting questions about language, gender and power, an issue Lakoff (1973, 1975) addressed directly. In addition to differences in vocal pitch, Lakoff argued that women display a female speech register in which speech differs to that of men's on different levels, indicating women's subordinate position in society. This is outlined in Table 5.1. Lakoff argued that women display distinctive characteristics of speech in their conversations and that this register serves as a marker for women's subordinate social status. Specifically, she argued that the female speech register reinforces attributions to stereotypes, such as incompetence and timidity, which can be damaging for women. This hypothesis is supported by findings related to other gender differences in language use, such as the finding that in conversations, women tend to interrupt less often than men (Ng & Bradac, 1993; Reid & Ng, 1999; Zimmerman & West, 1975). However, other findings support the idea that instead of this register being unique to women, it is characteristic of low status groups in general (Lind & O-Barr, 1979; McFadyen, 2011) and is therefore more likely to be a 'powerless' linguistic style (Blankenship & Holtgraves, 2005). The majority of this research has been carried out in the English language, so findings cannot necessarily be generalized to other cultures (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1999). Leaper and Robnett (2011) conducted a metaanalysis of studies investigating gender and language style. They found that there was a small, but statistically significant effect in which women used more tentative language. However, this effect was larger in longer conversations, which suggests that women's use of tentative speech style may reflect their greater sensitivity to their conversational partners, rather than lack of assertiveness. In keeping with this idea, Park et al.'s (2016) analysis of 10 million messages from over 50,000 Facebook users revealed that the language women used was warmer, but no less assertive, than men's.

TABLE 5.1 The female speech register

Level of variation	Examples
Lexical	Fewer expletives, e.g., 'Dear me!' instead of 'Oh s**t!' Empty adjectives, e.g., 'divine', 'adorable'
Syntactic	Tag questions, e.g., 'It's hot today, isn't it?'
Prosodic	Rising intonation in statements, e.g., 'Dinner will be ready at 6 o'clock?'
Pragmatic	More indirect speech acts, e.g., 'Would you mind terribly turning down the TV?'

LANGUAGE AND STEREOTYPING

Through language, we also let others know what we think about our own and other groups (Beukeboom & Burgers, 2019). Of course, the simplest way in which language can transmit ideas about groups is for senders to explicitly assert them (e.g., 'they are friendly' or 'they are aggressive') (Sutton, Douglas, Elder & Tarrant, 2008). However, this type of explicit open statement can have its disadvantages. For example, in making such bold assertions, people run the risk of being seen as biased or even prejudiced. So, it is not surprising that language provides avenues to express ideas about groups more indirectly. For example, it is possible to transmit stereotypes of a group without explicitly referring to it. One can, for example, describe the behaviour of individual group members in biased ways (e.g., Fiedler, 2008; Lyons & Kashima, 2003; Maass, 1999; Wigboldus & Douglas, 2007).

Serial transmission

An example of such a bias is when talking about a particular group or group members, a communicator can describe more behaviours that are consistent, versus inconsistent, with stereotypes. For example, Lyons and Kashima (2003) asked participants to retell a story that contained stereotype-consistent and inconsistent information about individual group members in serial communication chains. These chains are rather like the children's game sometimes called 'Chinese whispers'. Typically, playing this game shows that as the original story is told to a recipient who in turn tells it to another recipient and so on, it bears less and less resemblance to the original. Indeed, Lyons and Kashima found that by the time the

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story had reached the end of the chain, much of the stereotype-inconsistent information had disappeared, while significantly more of the stereotype-consistent information had survived. Imagine you were told a story about a working-class sports fan who, among other things, drinks a lot of beer and writes moving and eloquent poems to his boyfriend. You tell this story to another person, who passes it on to a third person, who passes it on to a fourth. The first piece of information, being stereotype consistent, is more likely to continue to the end of this chain than the last. Crucially, Lyons and Kashima (2003) found that this bias was stronger when communicators were led to believe that the stereotype was widely shared by others in their community. It appears that people tend to reproduce stereotype-consistent information because they think it is consistent with a shared worldview, or a **common ground**, and is therefore likely to be easily understood and accepted by recipients (Clark, 1996; Kashima, Klein & Clark, 2007; Klen, Clark & Lyone, 2010). In contrast, information that is inconsistent with widely shared stereotypes is less likely to result in successful communication. Instead, communicators may anticipate receiving puzzled or even argumentative responses.

Common ground
Shared worldview between individuals.

Subsequent research has shown that the desire to be liked by one's conversation partner is important (Castelli, Pavan, Ferrari & Kashima, 2009). Telling people stories that contradict our shared beliefs about the world can be highly informative, but is a socially risky strategy, in part because it may lead to failures of communication. When people strongly want to be liked, they are more likely to withhold stereotype-inconsistent information (Clark & Kashima, 2007). Thus, driven by the temporary, small-scale, 'local' goals we have in conversation (to transmit information, to be liked), our actions inadvertently have the effect of reinforcing cultural assumptions, including stereotypes (for an accessible review of these mechanisms, see Martin, Cunningham, Hutchison, Slessor & Smith, 2017). Cultural stereotypes are especially likely to be reinforced when people tend to communicate within like-minded groups rather than being exposed to people with different perspectives. The structure of people's communication networks matters (DiFonzo et al., 2014).

Another line of research leads to a similar conclusion. Fast, Heath and Wu (2009) found more famous, familiar sports players are discussed more by fans, independently of how

well they are actually performing. In this case, the desire to find 'common ground' in conversation trumps the actual quality of players, and reinforces the fame of players who are not necessarily any better.

Language abstraction

Whereas the study of serial transmission is concerned with biases in *what* behaviours are described, much research has been devoted to biases in *how* they are described. A considerable body of research has examined how language may perpetuate and transmit stereotypes and prejudice in a process called the **linguistic intergroup bias (LIB)** (Maass, 1999; Wigboldus & Douglas, 2007). Informed by the linguistic category model, which asserts that descriptions of events can occur at varying levels of abstraction from concrete (e.g., verbs) to abstract (e.g., adjectives) (Semin & Fiedler, 1988), the LIB assumes that behavioural events can be described at different levels of abstraction, ranging from concrete verbs such as 'hit' or 'kissed' to adjectives such as 'violent' and 'affectionate' and also nouns (e.g., 'aggressor') (Carnaghi et al., 2008). As language becomes more abstract, it conveys less about the situation and the specific form of the behaviour, implies longer duration and conveys more about the characteristics of the person whose actions are described.

Linguistic intergroup bias (LIB) The tendency for people to describe ingroup positive and outgroup negative behaviours abstractly, but to describe ingroup negative and outgroup positive behaviours concretely.

In the LIB, ingroup members' positive behaviours and outgroup members' negative behaviours are described in abstract terms, as if they reflected the underlying qualities of each group. In contrast, ingroup members' negative and outgroup members' positive behaviours are described in concrete terms, as if they were isolated events quite unrelated to how group members would normally behave (see Table 5.2). Therefore, even if an equal proportion of the positive and negative behaviours of each group were described, ingroup members would be described more favourably. The LIB occurs in many intergroup contexts, in many countries, in several languages and in naturally occurring settings as well as the laboratory (for a review, see Wigboldus & Douglas, 2007). In part, the linguistic bias reflects the impact of stereotypical expectancies on the way people encode social information. Having encoded a negative behaviour abstractly, perhaps because of ingroup bias, people are more likely to describe it in those terms (Ruscher, 1998). The transmission of information in more abstract terms also leads to more stereotypical impressions being formed by recipients (Karpinski & von Hippel, 1996; Wigboldus, Semin & Spears, 2000).

TABLE 5.2 Linguistic intergroup bias

	Ingroup	Outgroup
Positive	Abstract, e.g., caring, helpful	Concrete, e.g., cared, helped
Negative	Concrete, e.g., hit, hurt	Abstract, e.g., aggressive, violent

The LIB is not just affected by how communicators have encoded events. It may reflect a desire to protect one's social identity. It is heightened when different social groups are highly unequal in status, and when one group feels relatively deprived (see Chapter 14): that is, it perceives that 'they' are unfairly getting a better deal than 'we' are (Moscatelli, Albarello, Prati & Rubini, 2014). It is also heightened when communicators perceive an outgroup to be threatening: people who display the intergroup bias also display heightened levels of the stress hormone cortisol when confronted with an outgroup threat (Sampasivam, Collins, Bielajew & Clément, 2018). Language gives communicators an opportunity to reduce this threat by implicitly putting down the outgroup and boosting the ingroup (Maass, 1999). Albarello and Rubini (2018) provided experimental evidence for this idea: after reading about the alleged threats posed by Roma people to their economic wellbeing or their culture, Italian participants showed a stronger LIB against them.

The LIB is also more strongly displayed by people who have a higher need for cognitive closure – a desire to possess a definitive answer to a topic (Webster, Kruglanski & Pattinson, 1997). It is also influenced by mood (Beukeboom & Semin, 2005, 2006), knowledge about

the recipient (Fiedler, Bluemke, Friese & Hofmann, 2003), proprioceptive (body perception) cues such as arm extension (Beukeboom & de Jong, 2008), and the norms of communicative contexts, such as legal and employment settings (Rubini & Menegatti, 2008; Schmid & Fiedler, 1996, 1998). Culture also matters. Kashima, Kashima, Kim and Gelfand (2006) found that South Korean speakers tend to use verbs to describe social objects (including people and groups), but English speakers tend to use adjectives (see also Maass, Karasawa, Politi & Suga, 2006). It is argued that this occurs because adjectives are more abstract and therefore devoid of information about the context: they zero in on a person or other object's characteristics irrespective of context. This decontextualizing linguistic process is less consistent with cultural collectivism.

Linguistic expectancy bias Interpersonal version of the linguistic intergroup bias, whereby people describe expected behaviours abstractly and unexpected behaviours concretely.

Further research suggests that under some circumstances, communication goals may even reverse the bias, which in interpersonal terms is called the **linguistic expectancy bias**. For example, the linguistic expectancy bias would normally imply that people describe their friends' positive and enemies' negative behaviours abstractly, and their friends' negative and enemies' positive behaviours concretely – because these descriptions correspond to what is expected. However, given a temporary motivation to describe an enemy in positive terms, communicators tend to use abstract language to describe their positive behaviour and concrete language to describe their negative behaviour, reversing the normal bias (see Figure 5.4). The linguistic bias is also reversed for descriptions of friends, where, for negative behaviours, descriptions become more abstract with an instruction to describe the behaviour unfavourably (Douglas & Sutton, 2003; for a review, see Wigboldus & Douglas, 2007). Thus, the strategic use of abstract and concrete language may allow communicators to create impressions of friends and enemies, and ingroup and outgroup members, that diverge from their own perceptions. Far from merely replicating biased mental representations (although this is in itself an extremely important function), the LIB may be used to create new ones.

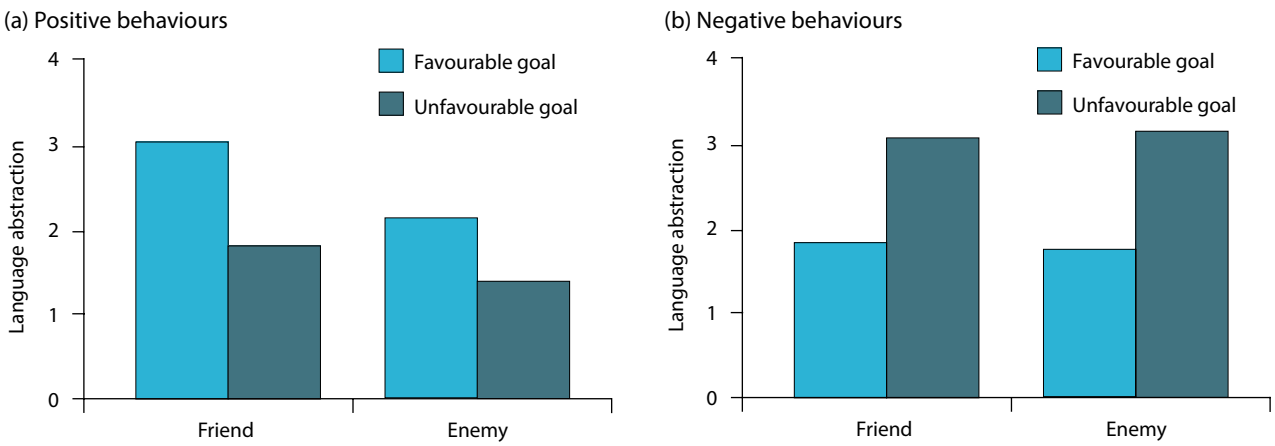

FIGURE 5.4 Reversal of the linguistic bias Although descriptions of others' behaviours are strongly influenced by interpersonal factors such as prior expectancies, this research demonstrates that the explicit goal to select a favourable or unfavourable description can reverse the typical linguistic bias. For example, for positive behaviours (a), participants described enemies' behaviours more abstractly if given a favourable rather than unfavourable goal. For negative behaviours (b), participants described friends' behaviours more abstractly if given an unfavourable rather than a favourable goal.

Source: Data from Douglas and Sutton (2003), Experiment 1

Although communicators appear able to use linguistic bias strategically, they also appear to have limited power to inhibit bias when instructed to do so (Douglas, Sutton & Wilkin, 2008). As a result, even communicators who value social equality may be prone to the LIB, and so unwittingly contribute to intergroup bias (Maass, 1999). Sometimes, therefore, people will be unable to stop themselves from transmitting stereotypes.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

The old saying goes that 'actions speak louder than words'. To examine the extent to which this is true, we now turn our attention to **nonverbal communication**. Nonverbal communication is everything that communicates a message but does not involve words. DePaulo and Friedman (1998) define nonverbal communication as 'the dynamic, mostly face-to-face exchange of information through cues other than words' (p. 4) (see also Burgoon, Guerrero & Floyd, 2016, for a recent overview of the entire field of nonverbal communication). When you think of nonverbal communication, you probably think of things like gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice. However, the term can be considered to be even broader than this – when social psychologists think of nonverbal behaviours, they also think of things like dress style and tattoos, which communicate information about personality, identity, likes and dislikes without a person needing to utter a word. Nonverbal communication can also be something as simple as how furniture is arranged in a room. For example, picture a situation where you walk into a lecturer's office to find yourself immediately confronted by their desk – what are they trying to communicate to their visitors? Does this make the lecturer seem approachable? Clearly, it is not always necessary to use words to convey a message loud and clear (see Figure 5.5).

Nonverbal communication
Everything that communicates a message but does not include words.

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FIGURE 5.5 Nonverbal communication is communication 'without words' People are skilled nonverbal communicators and are able to decode a vast number of nonverbal communicative actions. How many different forms of nonverbal communication can you think of?

People can communicate a great deal of information without using words (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992, 1993; DePaulo & Friedman, 1998). Theorists have also argued that the ability to communicate nonverbally is at the core of our **social intellect** – the ability to infer others' motives, emotions, personality and intentions, and the communication of information about ourselves (Ambady & Weisbuch, 2010). The ability to 'read' nonverbal communication develops very early in life. Preschool children are not only able to 'read' less than 30 seconds of nonbverbal communication by one stranger towards another, but are influenced by it. If the body language is positive, they tend to like the stranger to whom it was directed, and if negative, they tend to dislike them (Skinner, Meltzoff & Olson, 2017). It is surprising therefore that nonverbal communication has been relatively overlooked in mainstream social psychology compared to other topics.

Social intellect
Set of skills involving the ability to infer people's emotions, motives, intentions and personality, and the ability to communicate the same information about the self.

Perhaps this is because it is often difficult to separate nonverbal communication from speech in everyday social interaction (Krauss & Chiu, 1998). Also, people are capable of such a wide variety of nonverbal behaviours, hundreds of thousands of facial expressions, gestures and movements in all (Pei, 1965), and when one or more behaviours are used in combination with others, *and* together with speech, it is difficult to break down and code distinct behaviours to try to understand their purposes and consequences. Although difficult to study, it is clear that nonverbal cues serve several purposes in communication.

Overall, nonverbal cues are a powerful tool for enhancing communication (see also Argyle, 1990). Sometimes, we even use nonverbal cues that contradict what we say and this too can be powerful. For example, what might it mean to say to someone that you are happy while showing a big smile versus making the same statement with a frown or a sneer? From the first interaction, the recipient might believe that the smiling person is actually happy as they have stated, but a sneer or frown might be interpreted as dishonesty or sarcasm (Bugental, Love & Gianetto, 1971). Clearly, the nonverbal cues we use when we speak to others can add an extra dimension to our communication. Nonverbal cues are therefore a vital part of being able to communicate successfully. Also, we learn nonverbal communication like we learn a first language, without any formal training. Sometimes, we do not even know we are using it. In many ways, we take nonverbal communication for granted, so much so that we often underestimate its importance and impact.

There are many types of nonverbal communication and the following sections specifically cover some of the main types of nonverbal behaviours that accompany speech, such as touch, facial expressions, gestures and nonverbal information conveyed in speech. These are also known as **co-verbal behaviours**, because although they can occur without speech, they are the types of nonverbal behaviours that people exhibit when they converse with others. We examine how social psychologists study these behaviours, how people's nonverbal behaviours are influenced by the presence of others, and how people 'decode' others' nonverbal behaviours. Finally, we highlight the role of nonverbal behaviours in deception.

Co-verbal behaviours
Nonverbal behaviours that accompany speech and convey information to a receiver.

Touch

At a basic level, we communicate with others through touch. For example, placing one's hand on another person's shoulder can be a way of communicating comfort to them when they are ill or upset. Alternatively, placing a hand on a person's chest can be a way to communicate that you want them to go away. Touch is therefore a powerful means of communicating with another person without the use of words. Heslin and Patterson (1982) argued that there are five specific types of touch based on the objectives they are intended to achieve:

1. Professional/functional: for example a physician touching a patient.
2. Social/polite: for example shaking someone's hand.
3. Friendship/warmth: for example hugging.
4. Love and intimacy: for example kissing.
5. Sexual: for example making love.

The meaning of the touch is therefore dependent on who is being touched (and where) and the context in which the touching occurs. For example, an affectionate touch between a romantic couple may be meant to communicate enduring love. In fact, the results of a diary study of 102 couples showed that people who were frequently touched by their romantic partners felt more intimate with them, and experienced more positive moods (Debrot, Schoebi, Perrez & Horn, 2013). These frequently touched participants were also better able to suppress unwanted thoughts (Debrot, Schoebi, Perrez & Horn, 2014). A follow-up survey revealed that these people experienced greater wellbeing six months after the main phase of the study had been completed (Debrot et al., 2013). The same touch between friends can be a gesture of friendship: literally reaching out and touching people from other social groups has been shown to reduce prejudice (Seger, Smith, Percy & Conrey, 2014). Of course, touch is not always positive. People often use touch to assert dominance over others and induce compliance. Sometimes these goals are achieved by aggressive touches such as shoves and slaps (Burgoon, Buller & Woodall, 1989).

There are also distinct gender differences in the effects of touch. For example, it appears that, in general, women like to be touched more than men but it depends on who is doing the

touching (Burgoon et al., 1989; Heslin, 1978). For example, women report not liking touch from male strangers at all, whereas men do not mind the touch of a female stranger. Women are also more likely to read sexual messages into touch than are men (Heslin & Alper, 1983). In general, people are more likely to touch people of the opposite sex than the same sex, but men touch women more than women touch men (Henley, 1973). This later finding may reflect differences in status because it has also been found that people who 'make the first move' in touching another person are seen as higher status. In judging the pleasantness of being touched by another person, people could be influenced by sex differences related to status differences between men and women in society. There are also significant variations in touch across cultures. People from some cultures (e.g., Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and South American) use a lot of touch in their communication but others (e.g., British, American and Asian) do not (Argyle, 1990). Like gender differences in touching, these cultural differences have the capacity for misinterpretation and miscommunication.

In relation to touching parts of people's bodies, humans also show contextual preferences for the space that is maintained *between* people's bodies in communication. In other words, they are able to communicate with others through the **interpersonal distance** they keep from them. Keeping a larger interpersonal distance makes it possible for a person to conceal information from the person they are interacting with. For example, a large interpersonal distance might make it more difficult for a recipient to detect and read nonverbal communication cues, whereas being 'up close and personal' allows people to see more and also do more (e.g., touch). Therefore, people may vary their interpersonal distance from others as a way of maintaining privacy and intimacy. Hall (1966; see also Hall, 1984) conducted observational studies on interpersonal distance and observed four 'zones' of interpersonal distance. People use these zones of distance in interpersonal contact situations depending on the context and who is being spoken to (see Figure 5.6). These zones are as follows:

Interpersonal distance The closeness between one person and another.

1. Intimate zone: this is the 'up close and personal' distance (up to 0.5 m) that allows people to read and detect the most subtle nonverbal cues. This distance also makes it easier to touch and detect other personal cues such as body temperature and smell. It is generally reserved for close intimate relationships such as romantic couples.
2. Personal zone: this distance is still close (typically 0.5–1 m) allowing touch to occur, but not so close that body temperature and smell can always be detected. It is generally observed between friends and close acquaintances.
3. Social distance: typically used in casual interactions with strangers, newer or more distant acquaintances, this distance (usually 1–4 m) does not typically allow touch to occur, but still allows people to maintain eye contact and observe other nonverbal cues such as facial expressions.
4. Public distance: this is the largest distance in social communication (over 4 m) and is typically used in professional situations to signal differences in status, power or the desire for interaction. For example, bosses may distance themselves in meetings by heading the table and keeping employees at an acceptable public distance.

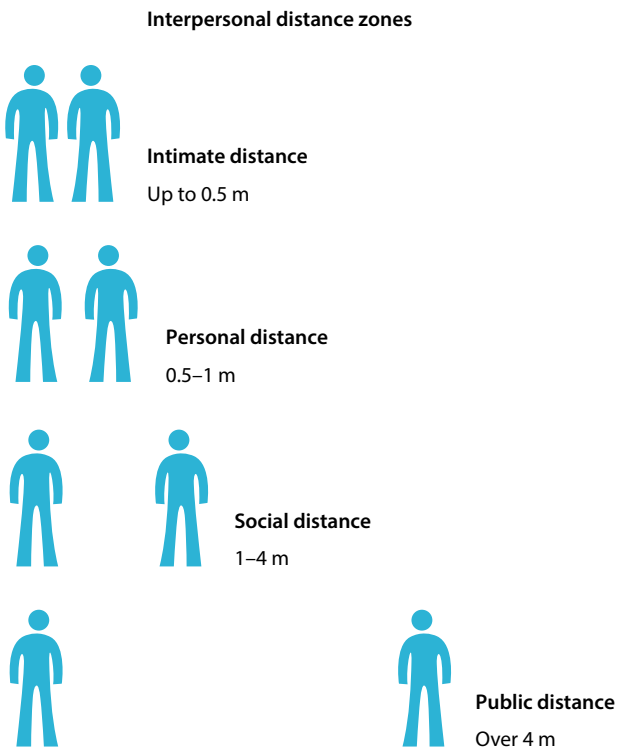

FIGURE 5.6 Levels of communication distance People find different levels of distance to others appropriate depending on the social situation and the person being communicated with. Our most intimate zone is reserved for those with whom we have intimate relationships. Our most public distance is typically used in professional contexts.

Like touch in general, differences in interpersonal distance can be a powerful way to communicate with another person. Imagine interacting with an acquaintance who suddenly 'invades' your personal space. What are they trying to communicate to you? What do you think of them? Perhaps more importantly, what would you do? Argyle and Dean (1965) argued that people strongly protect their interpersonal distance and attempt to compensate for any threats to this distance. Because interpersonal distance is such a strong marker of intimacy, people will go to some lengths to protect themselves and maintain their desired level of intimacy. In particular, if our personal space is challenged in some way (e.g., by someone getting too close to us in conversation), we tend to adapt by making adjustments in other cues (e.g., by looking away). Again, there are cultural differences in interpersonal distance. For example, some cultures think nothing of standing very close to one another during conversation, but it may make people from other cultural backgrounds feel uncomfortable (Hall, 1966).

EXPLORING FURTHER

One very funny episode of the US TV programme *Seinfeld* shows a group of people struggling to cope with a 'close talker' – a man who, in conversation, constantly invades others' personal space by getting too close. If you can, watch this episode and observe how people react to this person. These sorts of behaviours often stand out to us because they violate social norms. Can you think of a time and place when this happened to you? How did you react?

Facial expressions

Facial expressions Voluntary or involuntary changes in the face that convey information to a recipient in conversation.

Perhaps the most studied mode of nonverbal communication is people's **facial expressions**. Facial expressions are changes in the face that can occur as an automatic response to an internal state (e.g., feeling or emotion) or as a voluntary response to a social situation (e.g., letting someone know a feeling or emotion). They can also be used to replace words, such as raising one's eyebrows to ask a question. Over the years, social psychologists have been most interested in discovering if facial expressions are consistent within specific emotions and also if facial expressions of emotion are effectively decoded by others. This has largely stemmed from Darwin's (1872) position that there is a small set of human emotions each associated with specific facial expressions. Indeed, later research has shown that there are six basic emotions (happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise and disgust) and that these are reflected in six basic emotional facial expressions (Ekman, 1982; Ekman & Friesen, 1975) – although as we shall see below, recent research suggests there may be still fewer. These basic expressions are associated with distinguishable patterns of muscular activity.

Research suggests that people's facial expressions tend to match the emotion being expressed in their voices (Putnam & Krauss, 1991; Winton, Putnam & Krauss, 1984). Also, the facial expressions associated with the six basic emotions have been shown to be relatively universal (Ekman, 1971, 2016; Ekman & Friesen, 1971; Ekman et al., 1987). In many studies, Paul Ekman and his colleagues showed people from many different countries a series of photos depicting six basic emotions and found that people in a variety of Western, Asian and tribal cultures were very accurate in recognizing the

emotions. Moreover, they were accurate in judging the expressions of faces from within their own culture and from other cultures. Thus, facial expressions of emotion appear to be largely consistent across cultures. Whether this reflects innate links between facial movements and emotional expression or universals in socialization processes (or both – see the Critical Focus box later) is an interesting question, but while many other social psychological factors vary across cultures, facial expressions of basic emotions appear to be more or less universal.

The work of Ekman and his colleagues has been extremely influential; indeed, most investigations of emotional facial expressions use the photographs developed in his research. Some researchers have, however, criticized this method, arguing that the use of static, posed photographs cannot capture the dynamic nature of emotional expressions (e.g., Russell, Bachorowski & Fernandez-Dols, 2003). Other techniques have been developed to get around this issue, such as a technique devised by Krauss, Curran and Ferleger (1983), where research participants are asked to identify emotions from video footage. The findings obtained from this technique, as well as the cross-cultural consistency of facial emotions, largely echo the findings from Ekman's research. Ekman's own work has led to the development of the Facial Action Coding System – a standardized way of measuring small muscle movements that can allow for the decoding of emotional facial expressions and comparisons of human expressions with animal (e.g., chimpanzees) expressions (Vick, Waller, Parr, Smith Pasqualini & Bard, 2007). A recent, sophisticated study of emotion recognition in two cultures (British and Chinese) using dynamic facial displays suggested that perhaps only four emotions are universally displayed: happiness, anxiety, surprise, and disgust (Jack, Sun, Delis, Garrod & Schyns, 2016).

One important point to note is that although facial expressions appear to be consistent across cultures, there are some important cultural differences in the rules governing when the expressions can be displayed. In other words, while the basic expression of the emotion may be innate and therefore universal, the **display rules** for the emotion for a particular culture are not fixed and must be learned. For example, it appears to be less acceptable for men in Western cultures to show emotions than women (Argyle, 1990), so they must learn the display rules that are appropriate for their cultural context. Another example of appropriateness within the same culture dictates that people are not permitted to laugh at funerals, but laughing is more than appropriate with the same group of people in a different context (e.g., at the pub).

Display rules
Cultural rules governing the appropriateness of expressing emotions in particular contexts.

In light of examples like this, Ekman (1971) argued that the universals of language are restricted by cultural norms of acceptability. Research supports this argument. For example, Ekman (1973) found that when Japanese and American participants were asked to view an unpleasant video in private, both groups displayed facial expressions of negative emotions. However, when later talking about the video with an experimenter, the Japanese participants did not continue to display these expressions, unlike the American participants. Both groups adhered to their own cultural display rules for the expression of negative emotions. Another interesting example is that people tend to be better at recognizing facial expressions within their own race or ethnic group (Kitayama, Mesquita & Karasawa, 2006). Thus, while basic facial expressions might be the same across cultures, the subtleties of expressions (and subsequent decoding of these expressions) might be dependent on cultural differences in expressing emotions. These differences may be underpinned by cultural differences in how people make sense of emotions and emotional information (Mesquita, Bolger & De Leersnyder, 2016) and how they evaluate emotions as good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate for members of their culture (Tamir et al., 2016).

TIME TO REFLECT

Think about some social encounters you have had with people of different cultures. Did you ever experience a 'culture clash' in nonverbal behaviour? Could you always read each others' facial expressions?

Gestures

People communicate with their faces and they also communicate with their hands and arms in ways that are different from basic touching. For example, think about how you ask for the bill in a busy restaurant. Think about how you would communicate with a driver who disobeyed a road rule. It is likely you will think of some kind of expression that involves your hands and arms in order to deal with these social situations. The many common movements we use to communicate, both with and without verbal communication, are another kind of nonverbal communication known as **gestures** (Ekman & Friesen, 1972). Gestures are common in groups who do not speak (e.g., religious groups who have taken a vow of silence) and the hearing-impaired where specific languages of gestures (sign languages) facilitate communication. They are also common when people who do not speak the same language communicate with each other.

Gestures Hand and arm movements that accompany verbal communication.

There are many different types of gestures and, again, some are universal. For example, imagine someone asks you for directions – you are likely to point your finger in the direction the person should go. If someone silently offers you the popcorn in the cinema, it is likely that you will either accept with a smile or decline with an appropriate hand gesture. Gestures go along with speech to help us say what we want to say but they can also replace speech when it is not possible. Some of these latter types of gestures are called **emblems** or **quotable gestures** and again many are widely understood across cultures, such as waving the hand to say hello. However, many gestures are culture specific. One example is the 'moutza' in Greece, in which the open palm of the hand with extended fingers is thrust towards the recipient, accompanied by an expletive or insult. This gesture is likely to have little impact on, or at least meet with some confusion from someone outside Greece. Also, the same gesture can mean different things in different cultures. For example, 'no' in the UK is signalled by shaking the head from left to right, but the same gesture in India means 'yes'.

Emblems/ quotable gestures Gestures that replace or substitute for verbal communication.

E+/MUSTAFA ARICAN

In cases such as this, cross-cultural miscommunication may arise. One must be careful not to offend people with gestures that can be highly offensive in some cultures. For example, the 'thumbs up' gesture can mean a job well done or other kind of positive response to a British, American or Australian person, but to someone in the Middle East, this is an insulting 'up yours!' Clearly, it is advisable to consult one's travel guide to avoid miscommunications while travelling.

Also, the cultural basis of gestures is reinforced by the fact that new gestures are formed regularly and some that have originated from the popular media have become commonplace, everyday gestures. For example, gesturing to make the letter 'L' on one's forehead to signify that the recipient is a 'loser' was apparently first used in the film *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* in 1994.

Although gestures vary widely across cultures, they are used in all cultures; indeed, in our evolutionary history, gestures preceded speech as the main channel of communication (Corballis, 2014, 2017). The recent interest in embodied social cognition (Chapter 4) has seen an upsurge of interest in gestures and their function. Research shows that gestures are not merely an optional 'added extra' in thought and communication, but play a fundamental role. If you are speaking and cannot bring a word to mind, gesturing it helps you (Krauss, 1998). This finding has been used to help people who have difficulties after a stroke (Hadar, Wenkert-Olenik, Krauss & Soroker, 1998). Similarly, gesturing helps people comprehend words (Goldin- Meadow & Singer, 2003). Gesturing left, right, up and down helps speakers and listeners alike as they try to solve spatial problems (Hostetter & Alibali, 2008).

In a related line of research, Carney, Cuddy and Yap (2010) reported that sitting or standing up straight, in the fashion of a powerful person, causes physiological changes that are indicative of power (Carney, Cuddy & Yap, 2010). However, at best the jury is out on the effects of these so-called 'power poses'. Several researchers have tried, and failed, to replicate the physiological effects of these poses, or sometimes even its effects on the subjective feeling of power (e.g., Garrison, Tang & Schmeichel, 2016). Some reviews of multiple studies of power posing conclude that there is probably no effect at all (Simmons & Simonsohn, 2017), while others suggest there is some effect, at least on feelings of power (Carney, Cuddy & Yap, 2015; Cuddy, Schultz & Fosse, 2018; Gronau et al., 2017). If there is indeed an effect of power poses on felt power, it is surprisingly small, given what we already know from research on embodied social cognition and self-perception theory (Chapter 4). You may recall that we base inferences about ourselves partly on observations of our own behaviour – just as we base inferences about other people on their behaviour. 'If I'm posing powerfully, I must feel powerful' is the basic inference suggested by self-perception theory. Whether this, or some other mechanism, explains any effect of power posing on felt power remains to be discovered (Jonas et al., 2017).

Gaze

When a person communicates one on one with another person, they spend two-thirds of the time looking at the other person's eyes – a process known as **gaze** (Argyle & Ingham, 1972). Further, people also spend about a third of their time in conversations engaged in mutual eye contact with another person (**eye contact** or **mutual gaze**). Gaze is an important aspect of nonverbal behaviour. The amount of time a person spends gazing, and the type of gazing, can give a lot of information about what the person is feeling, their personal status and their intimacy with the person they are looking at. For example, just like interpersonal distance and touch, people tend to gaze more at people they like and people with whom they seek greater intimacy. People also like others who gaze more (Kleinke, 1986; Kleinke, Bustos, Meeker & Staneski, 1973). Of course, gaze is not always positive. Unwanted eye contact from strangers or disliked individuals can be uncomfortable. As

Gaze Looking at another person's eyes.

Eye contact/ mutual gaze When two people are looking at each other's eyes at the same time.

such, people will often explicitly avoid making eye contact with others and adopt special strategies (e.g., wearing sunglasses) to steer away from embarrassing social situations and maintain their privacy.

TIME TO REFLECT

Think of some of the situations in your life when you have wanted to avoid eye contact with another person. Why did you want to do this? How exactly did you avoid the eye contact?

Again, there are some interesting gender differences in gaze in the use and interpretation of eye contact. For example, women have been shown to engage in more eye contact than men (Hall, 1984; Henley & Harmon, 1985). Also, the rules of gaze appear not to be universal. For example, while in Western cultures people tend to gaze more when they are listening than speaking (Argyle & Ingham, 1972), one study showed that a sample of African American communicators adopted the opposite pattern – they gazed more when speaking (LaFrance & Mayo, 1976; for two studies of cultural differences in gaze, see Adams et al., 2010; Schofield, Parke, Castenada & Coltrane, 2008). People tend to use gaze as a way of signalling intentions in conversation such as the intention to begin speaking, so different cultural patterns like this could be the source of confusion and miscommunication. As in all aspects of nonverbal communication, it is important to take into account cultural differences so that insulting and embarrassing situations can be avoided (Hall, 1966).

Nonverbal communication, self-presentation and influencing others

Like much of what we do, our nonverbal behaviours are influenced by the presence of others (see also Chapter 9). Simply sitting in a room with other people alters our facial expressions, gestures, gaze and posture so that they are different from how they would normally be if we were sitting alone in a room (DePaulo, 1992; LaFrance, 1979; Morris, 1977). Why do we do this? As with other types of self-presentational behaviours, it partly comes down to the human desire to be liked (Argyle, 1990). We change even the most basic nonverbal aspects of our behaviours in response to what others are doing and what we think others think (and what we would like them to think) about us.

Our nonverbal behaviour is influenced by the presence of others in a variety of ways. For example, we may 'mimic' other people's gestures, postures and pauses, our accents change, our gaze patterns more closely match those of the communication partner and, at a more general level, we take turns in conversation (Bush, Barr McHugo & Lanzetta, 1989; Hatfield, Cacioppo & Rapson, 1994; Provine, 1989, 1992; Stel & van Knippenberg, 2008). As we saw in our coverage of speech accommodation theory, mimicking each other's language can make us more likable. Mimicking each other's nonverbal language has the same effect (Salazar Kämpf et al., 2018), and can even lead to perceptions that we are more moral (Bocian, Baryla, Kulesza, Schnall & Wojciszke, 2018). In fact, it might even make us more moral: there is some evidence that after being instructed to mimic, people act more prosocially (Stel, van Baaren & Vonk, 2008). People mimic more when they are conversing with someone they find sexually attractive (Karremans & Verwijmeren, 2008), suggesting that they are doing it strategically. Argyle and Dean (1965) argued that people typically reach an equilibrium in conversations and maintain it by responding in compensatory ways to any changes in their conversational partner's behaviour. In other words, we make adjustments in the way we speak and in our nonverbal behaviours in response to what our conversation partners are doing.

Getty Images/RapidEye

Also, people tend to use nonverbal cues differently when they are attracted to the person with whom they are talking. Specifically, a process of coordination occurs more when people like each other. Smiles and affectionate gazes are generally linked to liking, attachment and relationship satisfaction. Likewise, positive nonverbal expressions and coordination increase interpersonal rapport. However, just like positive feelings and satisfaction, hostility can also be reciprocated through nonverbal communication (Cappella, 1997).

Much of this behaviour is automatic (see Chapter 3). That is, many of our nonverbal communications are spontaneous and implicit responses to others and the context around us. Nevertheless, there is some evidence to suggest that communicators do have some awareness of, and control over, their nonverbal expressions and can use them to manage their image and influence other people (DePaulo, 1992). Think, for example, about the behaviours of politicians during their speeches. What we see is typically slick and controlled with respect to nonverbal behaviours. Such individuals sometimes hire coaches to help them eliminate confusing or deceptive nonverbal behaviours from their communication. While this may not always be perfect, it is clear that people do have some control over the image they present to the world via their nonverbal behaviours.

The nonverbal behaviour of others can also influence what people think. For example, Weisbuch and Ambady (2009) exposed female participants to a series of silent video clips featuring female actors of varying body sizes. As the actors' body sizes increased, the participants witnessed either increasingly positive nonverbal behaviour from others (pro-heavy condition) or increasingly negative behaviours (pro-slim condition). Results revealed that participants in the pro-slim condition reported desiring a slimmer figure and admiring slimmer women more than participants in the pro-heavy condition. This occurred despite the fact that the participants were unable to identify the patterns of clips, and even when they were given monetary reward for their participation. It therefore appears that indirect and nonverbal social influence can exert an automatic influence on people's preferences (see Table 5.3).

TABLE 5.3 The power of nonverbal social influence

	Body ideal 10 = quite slim 90 = quite large	Attitudes to slim women 1 = least favourable 5 = most favourable
Pro-slim condition	28.8	4.5
Pro-heavy condition	34.1	3.9

Source: Data from Weisbuch and Ambady (2009)

It is also interesting to note that people's nonverbal cues can sometimes determine the behaviours of others. Beukeboom (2009) showed that the nonverbal cues exhibited by listeners can influence our subsequent language. Beukeboom asked undergraduate students to watch a video about a kiosk owner and then describe the video to two other people. These people were confederates who were asked by the experimenter to display either a positive (e.g., smiling and nodding) or negative (e.g., unsmiling and frowning) listening style. When speaking to a positive listener, people tended to use more abstract, subjective language, whereas when speaking to a negative listener, people stuck to objective facts and concrete details through the use of concrete language. Further, the positive listeners elicited more comments about the thoughts and emotions of the target in the video, and participants in this condition also gave more of their own opinions. It is argued that the positive listening style acts as a sign of agreement and understanding, which encourages people to give a more interpretative account. On the other hand, a negative listening style makes the speaker more cautious and descriptive. Thus, the nonverbal cues of listeners could have a significant impact on what people communicate and therefore what information is passed on to others.

In general, the expectations of one person can sometimes determine the behaviour of another. For example, evidence suggests that the expectations of healthcare personnel can affect the outcomes of their patients' medications (DiMatteo, 1993; Roter & Hall, 1992; Whitcher & Fisher, 1979), biased interviewers can elicit expected or stereotypical responses from their interviewees (Fiske, 1998; Gilbert, 1998; Hyman, 1954; Weitz, 1972; Word, Zanna & Cooper, 1974), and teachers' expectations can influence students' academic performance (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992, 1993; Harris & Rosenthal, 1985). Nonverbal cues such as touch, gaze and tone of voice undoubtedly play a significant role in these effects.

As well as being the topic of investigation in social psychological experiments, these nonverbal cues may affect experimental results in non-intended ways. Recall from Chapter 3 the famous replication attempt by Doyen, Klein, Pichon, and Cleeremans (2012), who could not reproduce earlier findings that priming people with stereotypes of the elderly made them walk more slowly down the corridor (Bargh, Chen & Burrows, 1996). That is, until the experimenters (research assistants) were informed of the hypothesis. Doyen et al. concluded that unconscious sentivity to cues indeed caused people to walk slower in these studies but the cues were the nonverbal language of the experimenter, and not the stereotype words displayed on a screen. More recently, Gilder and Heerey (2018) primed participants with power-related roles (boss or employee) and found, in a double-blind experiment, that this did not affect their behaviour in an online perception game. However, in Gilder and Heerey's (2018) subsequent experiments, participants' behaviour was affected by *experimenters'* beliefs abut the prime they had seen. Here, experimenters were masters and senior undergraduate students who knew the hypotheses: high power primes like 'boss' would, compared to low power primes, make people better at resisting distracting stimuli in the task. In fact, participants were better at resistant distraction when the experimenters believed they had been exposed to the high power prime. Whether they had *actually* been exposed to the prime made no difference. Somehow, through nonverbal, or perhaps unintended verbal, communication, the experimenters had influenced their participants. In general, participants tended to rate the experimenters as more trustworthy in the high power prime condition. That aside, however, we have no indication about which specific nonverbal or verbal behaviours of the experimenter might have influenced participants. That is, *how*, exactly, the experimenters caused participants to conform to hypotheses (as far as the experimenters were concerned, given their beliefs about the primes to which participants had been exposed)? This is clearly an important blind spot in research – we need to know how participants in the stereotype priming and power priming studies were, just like Clever

Hans, able to discern subtle nonverbal cues – and indeed what, on earth, those cues were. These studies show that it is crucial to run double-blind procedures in experiments where possible. But it is not always possible to do so – and we therefore need to know what cues to avoid giving participants. This will also tell us much a lot about nonverbal communication and social influence more generally. Presumably, the cues given off by experimenters are similar to those that people use in everyday life.

How well do people decode nonverbal behaviours?

In studying some of the factors (such as age and gender) that might influence nonverbal communication, psychologists have examined people's general **nonverbal sensitivity** – their ability to discern other people's thoughts, feelings and intentions from their nonverbal behaviour. Using the profile of nonverbal sensitivity test (Rosenthal, Hall, DiMatteo Rogers & Archer, 1979), everyday life situations are performed by an actor and video clips are presented to participants in varying modalities (e.g., facial expressions, body movements and tone of voice). Participants are then asked to 'decode' the nonverbal behaviours in the test (e.g., what is the person in the scene thinking, doing and feeling?). Using this procedure, it is possible to measure individual differences in sensitivity to nonverbal cues and examine some of the consequences of these differences. Using this test, it has been found that people's nonverbal sensitivity generally improves with age and experience (Buck, 1984; DePaulo & Rosenthal, 1982; Rosenthal, Hall, DiMatteo, Rogers & Archer, 1979). Also, psychopathology (e.g., depression, anxiety) sometimes compromises people's ability to understand nonverbal behaviour (Buck, 1984; Rosenthal et al., 1979). Further, women appear to be better at reading most facial expressions and other nonverbal cues than men. Using a newer test called the test of nonverbal cue knowledge (Rosip & Hall, 2004), it has been shown that women show a better knowledge of nonverbal cues, supporting the social psychological explanation that because of women's social roles (e.g., nurturing and child rearing), they are encouraged to be more expressive and emotionally responsive than men (Manstead, 1992).

Nonverbal sensitivity Ability to discern other people's thoughts, feelings and intentions from their nonverbal behaviour.

Other, more complex relationships exist. For example, it has been found that doctors who are good at reading body cues tend to have more satisfied patients (DiMatteo, Hays & Prince, 1986). Also, students who score high on nonverbal sensitivity learn more than less sensitive students (Bernieri, 1991). Finally, nonverbal sensitivity is linked to competence and status in children (Feldman, Philippot & Custrini, 1991). So, there is some evidence for individual differences in sensitivity to nonverbal behaviour. It should be noted, however, that basic intelligence (Rosenthal et al., 1979) and the ability to recognize faces (Etcoff, 1989) do not correlate with nonverbal sensitivity.

TIME TO REFLECT

People often refer to using a 'poker face' to conceal information from others. Before you read on and learn about the science of deceptive communication, do you think that people can always hide what they feel? How good do you think people are at reading others?

Nonverbal communication and deception

An interesting question that follows is whether nonverbal cues reveal the 'inner truths' that people may not want to reveal. Many talk shows introduce 'experts' who 'decode' body language to establish that a person is being dishonest. However, research shows that facial

expressions are not very helpful in aiding people to detect deception (Ekman & Friesen, 1974; Zuckerman, DePaulo & Rosenthal, 1981). Based on facial expressions, receivers' accuracy in detecting whether or not someone has lied is not much better than chance because, in general, it seems that people are able to exert some control over their facial expressions and adjust them in an attempt to hide deceit.

However, it appears that problems may arise when people place too much effort into controlling their facial expressions. In doing so they can forget that they are displaying cues to deception in other aspects of their nonverbal behaviour. For example, while people are focusing on their facial expressions, they may not be thinking about their elevated vocal pitch (Ekman, Friesen & Scherer, 1976), their excessive fiddling with objects (Knapp, Hart, & Dennis, 1974) or the number of times they touch their face (Ekman & Friesen, 1974). These other nonverbal channels can therefore become 'leaky' and receivers may perceive that something is up. Overall, though, receivers do not seem particularly adept at reading nonverbal deceptive cues (Bogaard et al., 2016). While people may experience a general feeling of suspicion, they cannot necessarily pinpoint exactly if and how they are being deceived (DePaulo & Rosenthal, 1979). Contrary to popular belief, women are no better at detecting lies through nonverbal cues than men (Rosenthal & DePaulo, 1979).

On the upside, however, people in professions that require them to detect lies are often better at doing so than the general population (Mann, Vrij & Bull, 2004; Vrij, Mann, Robbins & Robinson, 2006). Also, it has been found that the more liars are motivated to hide their deceit, the more nonverbal behaviours are (ironically) helpful to people in detecting their deceit. This **motivational impairment effect** means that, in trying too hard to hide their deceit, people actually make it easier for others to notice (DePaulo, Kirkendol, Tang & O'Brien, 1988). Other research suggests that women are more likely to show the motivational impairment effect than men (DePaulo, Stone & Lassiter, 1985) and attractive people display the effect more than less attractive people (DePaulo et al., 1988). Further, when people try to simultaneously control all their verbal and nonverbal cues, their deceit is more likely to be detected by recipients (DePaulo et al., 1988). Finally, people appear to find it easier to detect deceptive emotional communication than deceptive unemotional communication (Warren, Schertler & Bull, 2009). When trying to conceal their lies, people's arousal increases, which appears to impede their control over the cues they reveal (Suchotzki & Gamer, 2018).

Motivational impairment effect The ironic tendency for the motivation to hide deceit to make concealing deceit less effective.

In an apparent contrast to the motivational impairment effect, a recent study suggests that people are better at disguising their lies when they are controlling the urge to urinate. Fenn, Blandón-Gitlin, Coons, Pineda and Echon (2015) had participants drink either 50 or 750 ml of water before taking part in a study, creating a low or high need to urinate. Some 45 minutes later, participants had to tell the truth about one of their strong opinions, and lie about another. Observers were significantly less able to detect the lies of participants in the high need to urinate condition. Fenn et al. (2015) suggest that this is the result of an inhibitory spillover (presumably, no pun was intended): trying to control the signs of lying takes effort and forces mistakes, but trying to control something else (the need to 'pee') may actually spillover into an effortless and efficient control of body language. Coincidentally (or not), the former prime minister of the UK, David Cameron, was reportedly a devotee of a so-called 'full bladder technique': allegedly he would deliberately go into meetings and speeches in this condition, in order to achieve 'maximum focus and clarity of thought' (Hickman, 2011).

In summary, people cannot always 'hide' their attempts to mislead others: there are many variables that influence people's ability to do this (see also DePaulo et al., 2003). As we discuss in the Social Psychology in the Real World box below, beliefs about how to detect deception – even professional experts' beliefs – are often wrong (e.g., Bogaard et al., 2016). Using verbal cues – paying careful attention to what people say – may be more effective (and translatable, for example to online communication) than watching their body language.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Face expert Paul Ekman argues that people can be trained to read 'microexpressions' in others' faces. He argues that people often make these small 'slips' of gestures when they are deliberately trying to conceal something – people just need to know how to detect these subtle changes of behaviour. Read about Paul Ekman's work and learn more about the research associated with the study of microexpressions. For a critical review, read Burgoon, 2018a.

CRITICAL FOCUS

The evolution of facial expressions

To understand the functions of nonverbal behaviour, social psychologists often refer to a proposal made by Charles Darwin in 1872. In his work, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals,* Darwin asked why people's facial expressions of emotions take the forms they do. For example, why do we wrinkle up our noses when we feel disgusted about something? Why do we bare our teeth in anger? Darwin argued that people do these things because they are behaviours that earlier in our evolutionary history had specific and direct functions – most notably, they were useful for our survival. For example, baring one's teeth is a way of signalling an attack and wrinkling up one's nose is a way to avoid smelling unpleasant smells.

But if these behaviours are relics of our prehistoric age, why do we still do them? Do we still need them for some reason? It is not necessary for us to attack with our teeth anymore, so why do we still use the teeth-baring facial expression to express anger? According to later theorists (e.g., Hinde, 1972; Tinbergen, 1952), humans still display these expressions because over the course of their evolutionary history, the expressions have acquired value for communication. Specifically, they provide others with an indication of an individual's internal state. This is valuable social information and according to the evolutionary perspective, these are behaviours that have been selected by evolution, even if they are no longer used for their original function.

Earlier in the chapter, we discussed the universality of emotional facial expressions. For example, the six primary emotions appear to be recognized consistently across cultures (Ekman, 1971; Ekman & Friesen, 1971; Ekman et al., 1987). However, as we also discussed earlier, although facial expressions appear to be cross-culturally consistent, important cultural differences in display rules determine when the expressions can be displayed. Ekman (1971) argued that the universals of language are restricted by cultural norms of acceptability. Ekman's approach is therefore both universal and culture specific (Matsumoto, 2004).

What is more important, nature or nurture? Meta-analyses confirm that both universal and cultural factors are important in recognizing the six primary emotions (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Russell, 1994) and also how they are experienced (Kitayama, Mesquita & Karasawa, 2006). Thus, scientific thinking at present suggests that the apparent universality of facial expressions reflects differences in socialization and an innate link between emotions and facial muscle activity. This can be represented as in Figure 5.7, an example related to fear. When a person encounters an emotion-arousing stimulus, they appraise the stimulus, which activates an innate system of facial muscle movements in response. At that point, different facial display rules apply and determine the final emotional expression that is displayed. There is some evidence that the brain is specialized to process and respond to facial expression. For example, Wicker et al. (2003) found that watching a disgusted facial expression in another person's face activated the same areas of the brain as when participants were disgusted themselves. However, this is not proof that facial expressions have a neurological basis. It could be that people learn which facial expressions correspond to disgust, which informs their own responses to these expressions.

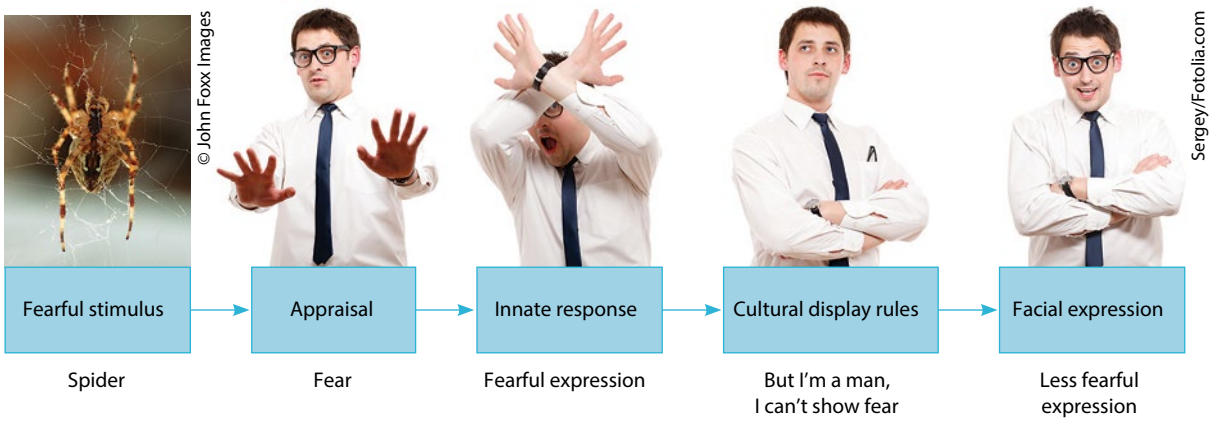

FIGURE 5.7 The role of culture and innate factors in the display of emotional facial expressions Ekman (1971) argued that both innate (nature) and culture-specific display rules (nurture) influence expressions.

Questions

1. If facial expressions provide information about communicators' internal states, why do you think people still use them when they are communicating on the phone? You might want to relate this to the section on embodied social cognition in Chapter 4.
2. How do you think the Darwinian argument might apply to other nonverbal behaviours? A special issue of the *Journal of Nonverbal Behaviour* (Patterson, 2003) explores the evolutionary bases of nonverbal behaviours such as mimicry, expressivity and laughter.
3. How easy is it to design an experiment to test the prediction that facial expressions are evolved? What variables might you manipulate, how would you do this and what would you measure?
4. Evolutionary psychologist Michael Corballis (2014, 2017) argues that hand gestures preceded our spoken language. He argues that as hominids evolved from the other apes, some of the early bipedal hominids began to use hand gestures, syntax was added to these gestures, and that speech now dominates gestures in human communication. Critically review this argument and the evidence that supports it.

CONVERSATION AND DISCOURSE

Conversations Interactions between individuals encompassing both verbal and nonverbal communication.

Back channel communication Cues that let the speaker know that a person is listening.

Of course, in our everyday **conversations**, we communicate with words and nonverbal cues at the same time. For example, people use both verbal (e.g., words like 'hello', 'go ahead' and 'goodbye') and nonverbal (e.g., waving, pausing, looking away) cues to begin, take turns in, and end interactions with others. People are generally skilled in their use of verbal and nonverbal conversational cues and resist attempts to violate conversational norms such as interrupting when someone has not finished what they are saying (e.g., Ng & Bradac, 1993; Reid & Ng, 1999). Communicators also make use of **back channel communication** cues (e.g., 'uh huh', 'sure', nodding and so on) to allow the speaker to know they are listening. Following these 'rules' is important to make communication go smoothly, and rule violations such as interrupting can be perceived as rude, or attempts to exert power in a conversation (Ng & Bradac, 1993). Further, the norms of communication differ depending on the context of the communication. For example, a conversation between a long-term romantic couple or between two close friends will probably include more instances of personal disclosure than conversations between more distant acquaintances, and the rules of turn-taking and reciprocity might be less important (Morton, 1978). A doctor-patient conversation may contain less reciprocity and turn-taking for an entirely different reason – the power

difference between the interactants. Of course, to some extent, doctors need to take charge of the conversation because they need to diagnose the patient's illness. However, research demonstrates that doctors show a tendency to dominate conversations to a significant extent, often allowing little scope for patients to respond and ask questions of their own (West, 1984). Thus, the power imbalance in this particular interaction significantly influences the course of the conversation.

TIME TO REFLECT

If doctors tend to dominate communication in the consultation room too much, what might be the implications for the effective diagnosis and treatment of illnesses?

Patterns of communication can also be examined using a technique called **conversation analysis (CA)**, where researchers study talk in interactions (see also Chapter 1). CA generally endeavours to describe the structure and patterns of interactions in everyday conversations (e.g., Drew, 2005; Heritage, 2005; Pomerantz & Mandelbaum, 2005; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 2007). Much of what we know about turn-taking in conversation is drawn from research using CA (e.g., Sacks et al., 1974). Using CA, researchers have identified that turn-taking is almost universal in conversation – communicators tend to talk one at a time, leaving little gaps and with little evidence of people talking at the same time.

Conversation analysis (CA)
The study of talk in interactions, which attempts to describe the structure and patterns of conversation.

Another approach adopted by social psychologists to analyse conversation is to conduct **discourse analysis (DA)**. DA refers to a number of methods used to analyse written texts (e.g., newspapers, articles), spoken language (e.g., conversations, speeches) or sign language use (see also Chapter 1). DA is based on the fact that conversations rarely take place in a neutral environment, so the context of the conversation is important. Specifically, what happens in discourse can be related to context, power and interaction. It is argued that mainstream methods in the social psychology of communication (e.g., artificially designing linguistic materials and speech) fail to capture the meaning of the communication. First, the content of conversations provides information about the people who are talking. For example, a teenager is likely to talk about completely different topics to someone in middle age. Second, the way in which people talk to one another (e.g., paralinguistic cues, nonverbal cues) can largely determine the meaning of the conversation. Therefore, isolating and examining specific features of communication can mean that researchers miss the meaning of the communication and can misunderstand how communication influences attitudes. Specifically, discourse analysts argue that language and non-linguistic cues are impossible to separate and that researchers should therefore examine the entire discourse in order to understand its meaning and influence (Billig, 1987; Edwards, 1997, 2005; Edwards & Potter, 1992, 2001; Potter, 1996; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

Discourse analysis (DA)
Analysis of an entire communicative event located in a particular sociohistoric context.

COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

One important question for social psychologists is how technologies influence our communication and social behaviour. Unsurprisingly, this is a growing area of research.

Most of the research on communication via new technology has focused on **computer-mediated communication (CMC)** and the differences between CMC and face-to-face

Computer-mediated communication (CMC)
Communication via the use of computer sytems through the Internet or a network connection.

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communication. Many studies of CMC have focused on the capacity of CMC users to communicate anonymously and on the hypothesis that communication via computers is different from other modes of communication. This idea has been explored extensively in a variety of settings since the beginnings of CMC, such as work-related behaviour (e.g., Siegel, Dubrovsky, Kiesler & McGuire, 1986; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986), the development of online relationships (e.g., Lea & Spears, 1995; Van Gelder, 1985) and the level of hostility in CMC (e.g., Douglas & McGarty, 2001, 2002; Kiesler, Siegel & McGuire, 1984; Lea, O'Shea, Fung & Spears, 1992). CMC is generally perceived to allow communicators the freedom to act in ways they normally would not, and liberate them from normal rules and standards of behaviour. The general argument that online communication is disinhibited stems from the argument that anonymous behaviour releases people from constraints that would normally keep behaviour regulated and in line with societal norms and standards. This concept of *deindividuation* (Diener, 1980; Zimbardo, 1969) means that people are able to get away with bad behaviour because they do not need to answer for it. You will learn more about deindividuation in Chapter 10 on group behaviour.

Generally, the concept of deindividuation is used to explain a variety of features of CMC, such as the higher levels of disclosure that are witnessed in CMC versus face-to-face interaction (Joinson, 2001), even if this is reasonably superficial (Attrill & Jalil, 2011), high levels of hostile, disinhibited or *flaming* behaviour witnessed over computer networks (e.g., Kiesler et al., 1984; Lea et al., 1992), and the tendency for hate groups to use the Internet to transmit their views and recruit new members (see Douglas, McGarty, Bliuc & Lala, 2005; for overviews, see Douglas, 2007, 2008). Going back to the topic of lying and deceit, one study showed that people who were highly motivated to tell lies were better able to do so in a text-based communication medium than when communicating face to face (Hancock, Curry, Woodworth & Goorha, 2008). Thus, the complete elimination of nonverbal cues may provide the freedom to violate social norms and also pave the way for people who want to deceive others.

There is also some evidence of the existence of other negative phenomena in CMC. For example, research by Williams, Cheung and Choi (2000) and Zadro, Williams and Richardson (2004) has examined how people deal with being ostracized in a computer-mediated setting, such as when their emails are unanswered or they are ignored in a chat room. Using a unique program called 'Cyberball', Zadro et al. (2004) showed that people have strong negative emotional reactions when they are ostracized in a CMC setting, even when they think they are only interacting with a computer. These reactions stem from an overarching need to belong and be socially included. However, the ambiguity of communicating with someone via a computer and the uncertainty concerning why they are being ignored (e.g., it could just be technological problems) does not attenuate the negative impact of ostracism (see Chapter 8). Also, there is evidence that people are often harassed, 'cyberstalked' and bullied when they communicate over the Internet (Baruch, 2005; Khoo & Senn, 2004; van Baak & Hayes, 2018; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004) and women and youths are the most common victims of these phenomena. Again, the most common explanation for these phenomena is that the medium is anonymous and therefore allows perpetrators to get away with negative behaviour. This may be the case, but it is unclear whether these phenomena actually occur more in CMC than in face-to-face communication.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Research using the Generalized Problematic Internet Use Scale (Caplan, 2002) suggests that overuse and misuse of the Internet can be associated with several psychosocial variables including depression, self-esteem, loneliness and shyness. Subsequent research has confirmed that problematic Internet use – commonly now referred to as 'Internet addiction' – is a growing phenomenon worldwide, and of course is associated with the use of smartphones as well as computers (Lee, Chang, Lin & Cheng, 2014). Complete the scale below, and compare your scores to those you find in studies using Caplan's (2002) scale. Bear in mind that this scale has not been designed or validated for use in detecting psychological problems and a high score is not a sign of psychological distress. Indeed, one of the major problems facing researchers in the field of Internet addiction is that there is no 'standard' measure of the phenomenon. Since more than 20 scales have been used in different studies, their results are hard to compare, and it is difficult to get a firm handle on the scale of the problem in different countries (Kuss, Griffiths, Karila & Billieux, 2014). Nonetheless, research has developed enough for researchers to begin to build elegant and powerful theories of Internet addiction. For example, Nowland, Necka and Caccioppo (2018) argue that problematic Internet use is often a response to loneliness. People seek out the basic human need of belonging and inclusion online when they find those lacking in the offline world – but ultimately find that their needs are not adequately met online, thus fueling the very problem they originally set out to solve.

Rate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree.

I use the Internet to talk to others when I feel isolated.	1	2	3	4	5
I seek others online when I feel isolated.	1	2	3	4	5
I use the Internet to make myself feel better when I'm down.	1	2	3	4	5
I go online to make myself feel better when I'm down.	1	2	3	4	5
I am treated better online than in face-to-face relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel safer relating to others online rather than face to face.	1	2	3	4	5
I am more confident socializing online than offline.	1	2	3	4	5
I am more comfortable with computers than people.	1	2	3	4	5
I am treated better online than offline.	1	2	3	4	5

I have got in trouble at work or school because I was online.	1	2	3	4	5
I have missed class or work because I was online.	1	2	3	4	5
I have missed a social event because of being online.	1	2	3	4	5
I have made unsuccessful attempts to control my Internet use.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel worthless offline, but I am someone online.	1	2	3	4	5
I am unable to reduce my time online.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel guilty about the time I spend online.	1	2	3	4	5
I have tried to stop using the Internet for long periods of time.	1	2	3	4	5
I lose track of time online.	1	2	3	4	5
I use the Internet for longer times than I expect to.	1	2	3	4	5
I have spent a good deal of time online.	1	2	3	4	5
I often go online for a longer time than I intended.	1	2	3	4	5
I am preoccupied with the Internet if I can't connect for some time.	1	2	3	4	5
I miss being online if I can't go on it.	1	2	3	4	5
When not online, I wonder what is happening online.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel lost if I can't go online.	1	2	3	4	5
It is hard for me to stop thinking about what is waiting for me online.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't worry about how I look when socializing online.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't worry about relationship commitment when socializing online.	1	2	3	4	5
I have control over how others perceive me online.	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Reprinted from Caplan, S., (2002). Copyright © 2002, with permission from Elsevier

Also, it is clearly the case that CMC is not always bad. One perspective proposes that what people do when they communicate via electronic devices is governed more by group norms and standards than we might think. In particular, the social identity model of deindividuation effects (Reicher, Spears & Postmes, 1995; Spears & Lea, 1994), which we will revisit in Chapter 10, argues that anonymity can facilitate the enactment of social identity. Rather than proposing that anonymity always leads to chaos and deregulated behaviour, Spears and Lea (1994) proposed that anonymity of the self to a powerful audience may be liberating in another way – anonymous communicators need not feel pressured to conform to the norms and expectations of the group (see also Reicher & Levine, 1994a, 1994b), but may enact other aspects of their identity that the group would normally deem unacceptable. CMC can therefore equalize the context of communication to make it less constrained by communicators' status. In other situations, the presence of an ingroup audience can strengthen the salience of the group's norms and people will react more strongly in accordance with those norms rather than going against them (e.g., Douglas & McGarty, 2001, 2002; Kitis & Jegels, 2018; Postmes, Spears, Sakhel & de Groot, 2001; Sassenberg & Boos, 2003). Thus, there is more purpose to anonymous behaviour than previous theories might suggest. Overall, the Internet provides people with a choice to either identify themselves or not, and this freedom may facilitate the expression of their identity to both opponents and like-minded individuals and groups.

People have also found neat ways to deal with the limited nonverbal cues present in CMC. You will all be familiar with the use of emojis and emoticons such as smiley faces made up of keyboard symbols to denote emotional reactions, such as :-) for happiness and :-(for sadness. Because of the limited nonverbal cues available to computer-mediated communicators, these tools have become a valuable way of expressing what would otherwise be lost (Derks, Bos & von Grumbkow, 2004; Walther & D'Addario, 2001). Interestingly, there is some evidence that women may make more use of emoticons than men (Oleszkiewicz et al., 2017; Wolf, 2000).

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

The power of words: detecting lies in crime, politics and online

Lies can be benign and help to protect people's feelings and the strength of relationships – much like any other politeness strategy. However, they are all too often enormously damaging. If we are unable to tell when someone is lying to us, we run the risk of being the victims of crime, seeing criminals unpunished, choosing the wrong romantic partners and electing the wrong leaders. On the other hand, if we assume that people are lying to us, then we are unlikely to trust them enough to reap the psychological and material benefits of cooperative relationships. Indeed, research suggests that our trust in each other's truthfulness is generally low: most people think lying is routine in everyday life and especially online, even if they do not admit to lying themselves (Toma, Jiang & Hancock, 2018).

So how well can we separate truth from lies? The task is inherently difficult, because lying is a well-rehearsed and effective social tool for so many people. It is supported by sophisticated human cognitive abilities. Good liars are better at counterfactual thinking (Chapter 3), which is the ability to 'mentally undo' past events and imagine alternatives (Briaze, Walsh, Deeprose & Ganis, 2017). Habitual liars are better at remembering social interactions, and in particular, at keeping a mental record of who has been told what (El Haj, Antoine & Nandrino, 2017; El Haj, Saloppé & Nandrino, 2018).

People are not very good at detecting lies, with success rates as low as 54 per cent suggested by some meta-analyses (Bond & DePaulo, 2006, 2008). Nonetheless, liars do betray themselves in various ways: according to Hartwig and Bond's (2014) analysis, a perfect human lie detector ought to be able to detect lies about 70 per cent of the time, regardless of whether the lie occurs in a high-stakes real-life situation or in a laboratory study. Why are we so bad at it, then? Although we may have strong intuitions about the telltale signs of lying, unfortunately our intuitions are often wrong. In studies by Bogaard et al.

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(2016), university students' beliefs about the nonverbal cues of deception were shown to be wrong. So were police officers' (see also Masip & Herrero, 2015). For example, both groups entertained the false belief that liars are more likely to avert eye contact and show agitated, 'shifty' body movements. On the other hand, their beliefs about the *verbal* cues that betray liars were more accurate. For example, liars are less likely to report conversations they had within or about the event they are lying about and to spontaneously correct errors or admit forgetting details, and they are more likely to tell their story in a strict (often rehearsed) chronological order, from beginning to end.

In research, much attention has been given to nonverbal cues to lying, and you will already have read about some of this research in this chapter. But findings like Bogaard et al.'s (2016) suggest that we may be better at using verbal cues than nonverbal cues – and perhaps that these cues are inherently more informative (Burgoon, 2018a, 2018b). Indeed, research shows that people who are better at detecting lies tend to focus more on verbal behaviour (Vrij, 2008). Further, training people to focus on verbal rather than nonverbal cues produces better human lie detectors (Hauch, Sporer, Michael & Meissner, 2016). Another advantage of focusing on verbal cues in behaviour is that it can be applied in a range of settings including situations in

which there is no nonverbal body language available, as in many forms of written and online communication.

In a vivid example of just this sort of research, Bond et al. (2017) analysed truthful and deceptive statements in the context of the 2016 US presidential debates. From a researcher's point of view, the beauty of a lot of political statements these days is not only that they are frequently deceptive, but they are also routinely examined by independent 'fact checkers', giving researchers an indication of which statements are true and which are lies. Research that captures real-life lies like this study has much to offer the study of deceptive communication, since laboratory studies tend to over-rely on fake deception: getting participants to lie under instruction or under a pretext that differs from lying in real life (Levine, 2018).

Bond et al. used a text analysis software package called Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC, pronounced Luke: Chung & Pennebaker, 2018). LIWC analyses only words themselves, sorting words into different categories and analysing their relative frequency. Bond et al. found that the types of words used in statements independently verified as truths or discredited as lies differed: for example, lies used more sensory words (e.g., look, see, hear), and more words relating to cognitive processes (e.g., know, consider, cause). Combined with a computer model of verbal lying behaviour, the LIWC analyses were able to detect deception with 74 per cent accuracy.

In recent political times when we are so concerned about misinformation, disinformation, fake news, and echo chambers (Brady, Wills, Jost, Tucker & Van Bavel, 2017), algorithms that can help people tell lies apart from truths hold much promise. The same goes for the challenge of online communication where people may not know whether the person they are communicating with is telling the truth, what their agenda is, or even if they are who they say they are. Here too there is evidence that automatic lie detection software using verbal cues may be effective (Ludwig, van Laer, de Ruyter & Friedman, 2016).

Questions

1. LIWC is a powerful package with many applications. It has also been applied to understand the communication style of prominent politicians including Donald Trump (Ahmadian, Azarshahi & Paulhus, 2017). What other applications can you find if you search 'LIWC' and 'social psychology' on Google Scholar? How might you use it in an area of social psychology that interests you?
2. The research we have reviewed here follows the mainstream, 'cues-based' approach to the detection of deception. But lies are often detected through the process of interactive communication, for example by persuading a liar to confess or asking them challenging questions in order to expose a lie (Masip, Blandón-Gitlin, Martínez, Herrero & Ibabe, 2016). Levine (2015) meta-analysed several studies and found that people are indeed much better at detecting lies when they engage with liars in conversation. Levine (2018) is a champion of ecologically valid lie detection research where people get to interact naturalistically. What are the pitfalls, as well as the merits, of this approach?

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

The Student Project on page 651 by Amos Fong from the University of Cambridge is relevant to our discussions in this chapter concerning online communication. Amos studied the tweets of active 'conspiracy theorists' and science communicators, and used a quantitative linguistic analysis to examine the emotions and themes they expressed in their tweets. This project is also relevant to material on group identity in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an overview of the social psychology of communication. We have discussed the rules of language, and the important social functions of language in identity, culture, cognition, gender and stereotyping. We have also discussed the study of nonverbal communication, conversation and discourse, and the social psychology of modern communication media. You will have learned that:

- The organization of a language depends on a set of structural and semantic rules so that the communication makes sense. However, the meaning conveyed by language does not always match the literal meaning and as skilled communicators, people are able to distinguish what someone means from what they say.
- People tend to be cooperative when they talk and obey a series of rules or maxims (quantity, quality, relation and manner) so that the communication meets its intended purpose. Breaking these rules can be a powerful way to make a point. People also observe rules of politeness, which mean that social interactions can run smoothly.
- Language influences the way we think. Language does not necessarily determine thought entirely but many findings suggest that language allows people to communicate more easily about aspects of the world that are important. Words can also influence what we think about groups and can influence our social interactions.
- Language contains important social markers, meaning that from language (and language use), communicators convey information about themselves. Language and its use can be a cue to our personality characteristics, social identities and our gender.
- People adjust the way they communicate to the context in which they are placed. In particular, people adjust aspects of their speech, such as their accents, to either converge with or diverge from their communication partners. In general, convergence occurs in positive, friendly interactions and people diverge to maintain their own identity or distance. This theory of speech accommodation has been broadened to include nonverbal communication in communication accommodation theory.
- There is some evidence to suggest that women and men speak differently. Women sometimes display the characteristics of a female speech register, which may or may not contribute to gender and power relationships in society.
- Language also enables people to communicate stereotypes. People can do this openly or more covertly through the use of verbs and adjectives varying in abstraction, or by only passing on stereotype-consistent information to others.
- Much of communication occurs through nonverbal channels such as facial expressions, touch and gestures. Some nonverbal behaviours are consistent across cultures but many are unique to specific cultures. We can influence (and be influenced by) others through nonverbal behaviours. Much of our nonverbal behaviour in social interaction is automatic or unconscious.
- Findings suggest that people are not particularly skilled at decoding facial expressions and there are many individual differences variables that predict how well people are able to decode nonverbal communication. Facial expressions are also not very helpful in aiding people to detect deception. However, people in legal professions are generally more skilled at detecting deception than the general population.
- The study of conversations examines both verbal and nonverbal communication. Conversation analysis studies talk in interactions to describe the structure and patterns of interactions in everyday conversations. Discourse analysis comprises a number of techniques to analyse written texts or sign language use. This method emphasizes the importance of conversational context.

» Modern technology influences communication in interesting ways. Many studies have focused on the effects of anonymous communication on behaviour, including increased disinhibition and hostility. However, digital communication can allow people to express important aspects of their identity.

This chapter has focused on communication and the importance of language and nonverbal behaviour in social interaction. In Chapter 6, we turn to the study of persuasion. When people try to persuade others, when are they successful and when do their efforts backfire? How do people understand persuasion processes?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. Critically overview Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of politeness phenomena.
2. How good are people at being able to detect deception?
3. Critically discuss the advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face and computer-mediated communication.

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Training language use to reduce prejudice

People tend to describe ingroup positive behaviours and outgroup negative behaviours more abstractly, and positive outgroup and negative ingroup behaviours more concretely, arguably because expressing events this way reflects enduring expectations and stereotypes about how groups behave (Maass, Ceccarelli & Rudin, 1996; Maass, Salvi, Acuri & Semin, 1989). Research investigating people's use of language abstraction in social contexts suggests that communicators are not conscious of their linguistic choices and find it difficult to control them (Franco & Maass, 1996, 1999). It is not surprising, therefore, that the use of language abstraction has been linked to the expression and perpetuation of stereotypes and prejudice (for an overview, see Wigboldus & Douglas, 2007).

However, other research indicates people's capacity to use language abstraction strategically. For example, people's linguistic choices are determined by threats to their own group (Maass et al., 1996) and communication goals (Douglas & Sutton, 2003). The fact that people's linguistic choices are receptive to motivational factors and communication goals suggests that language abstraction may not simply be a 'leaky' channel that betrays people and allows their stereotypes and prejudiced attitudes to seep through.

Imagine you work for a government organization that would like to develop a new prejudice reduction technique based on language use. Based on what you have read about language abstraction in this chapter, provide answers to the following questions:

1. What techniques might you suggest to make people aware of their use of language abstraction and its consequences? What are the merits and pitfalls of each and how easy would they be to introduce?
2. If you are able to make people aware of their linguistic choices and their consequences, how might you 'train' people to monitor the language they use when they talk about others?
3. How would you test the effectiveness of your intervention(s)?

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources including videos and self-test multiple choice questions to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

Burgoon, J.K., Guerrero, L.K. & Floyd, K. (2016). *Nonverbal communication*. London: Routledge. A state-of-the-art review of research on nonverbal communication.

Corballis, M.C. (2017). Language evolution: A changing perspective. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 21*(4), 229–36. A fresh, current and readable review of the evolutionary perspective on human language from a venerated figure in the field.

Fiedler, K. (Ed.). (2007). *Social communication*. London: Psychology Press. Edited by one of the leading researchers on the social psychology of communication, contains 16 chapters by leaders in the field on topics such as intergroup communication, sexism in language and language abstraction.

Fitch, K.L., & Sanders, R.E. (Eds.). (2005). *Handbook of language and social interaction*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum. Good reference for scholars of language and communication, covering mainstream methods and qualitative approaches such as discourse analysis and conversation analysis.

Holtgraves, T. (2010). Social psychology and language: Words, utterances and conversations. In S.T. Fiske, D.T. Gilbert & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (5th ed, vol. 1, pp. 1386–422). New York: McGraw-Hill. Detailed, up-to-date review of the literature on social psychology and language, arguing for the importance of investigations in social psychology that address language and communication.

Holtgraves, T.M., & Kashima, Y. (2008). Language, meaning, and social cognition. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 12*, 73–94. Comprehensive review article on language and social cognition, arguing that the two are interconnected because language is the primary medium for developing, representing, retrieving and communicating social information. Its insights remain current, in large part because this perspective does not, in our view, receive the research attention it deserves.

CHAPTER

6 PERSUASION

In this chapter, we turn our attention to the topic of persuasion. We outline some of the factors that determine when persuasion will be effective, the key models that explain persuasion, some of the techniques that people can use to be persuasive and, finally, how people are able to resist persuasion. By the end of this chapter, you will know when and how persuasion works and how persuasive techniques are used in advertising, marketing and everyday life.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- When does persuasion work?
- How does persuasion work?
- What can people do to persuade others?
- When persuasion does not work

Corbis

Why do car advertisements often depict attractive women in provocative poses draped over car bonnets? Why do famous celebrities promote perfume and beauty products? Why do politicians employ staff to write their speeches and help them with their campaigns? Try to imagine a day in your life when you are not confronted with commercial advertising designed to make you buy the latest fashions, phones and experiences. How would you decide what to buy? If political advertisements, speeches and propaganda did not exist, how would you decide who to vote for? We are persistently exposed to information attempting to influence what we buy, what we eat, who we vote for, what we look like, how we spend our free time – the list goes on. Indeed, persuading (and being persuaded) forms a vital part of our everyday life and it is impossible to imagine a world without persuasion. In this chapter, we turn our attention to this core topic in social psychology.

Persuasion is the process by which a message changes a person's attitudes – how they evaluate an object – or changes their behaviours. Attempts at persuasion can be powerful. For example, in 1933, millions of people in Germany voted for the Nazi Party despite its radical policies, thanks, in no small part, to a highly efficient and persuasive propaganda machine. On the positive side, 'quit smoking' campaigns have had a significant impact on smoking habits in many countries. In England, for example, smoking fell to its lowest recorded level in 2016 when only 16.1 per cent of adults were smokers (Office for National Statistics, 2017). Similarly, attitudes to drink driving have dramatically improved in the UK reflecting the success of 50 years of the 'THINK' drink driving campaign (gov.uk, 2014). Persuasion can therefore have both positive and negative effects.

Persuasion The process by which a message changes a person's attitudes or behaviours.

However, we must note that not all persuasive efforts are effective in changing people's attitudes and behaviour. For example, an attempt that persuades one person to quit smoking may not persuade another. Also, a persuasive political message that one person finds informative and useful, another may see as propaganda and therefore react negatively to it. Thus, persuasion is a complex and important process worthy of social psychologists' attention.

EXPLORING FURTHER

The study of persuasion is a core aspect of social psychology; one reason being that it involves many other areas besides psychology, such as marketing, consumer studies, health and politics. Use a search engine such as Google Scholar or a database such as PsycINFO or Web of Science and key in the search term 'persuasion'. How many results do you find? How much social psychological research (roughly) can you see?

Accordingly, a great deal of research has investigated social psychological factors involved in persuasion processes (e.g., Cialdini, 2001; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986a, 1986b; Sagarin, Cialdini, Rice & Serna, 2002). In this chapter, we will provide an overview of research and theorizing on the social psychology of persuasion. We will begin by outlining some of the conditions that make persuasion work. Specifically, we focus on the features of the persuasive source, the message itself and the target of the persuasive effort that make the effort successful. We then turn to the social psychological theories that explain how persuasion works. Here, we pay specific attention to the psychological pathways or processes that have been theorized and shown empirically to make persuasion happen. We then talk about some of the specific techniques that people can adopt to reach their persuasive targets most effectively. Finally, we focus on the contexts and consequences when persuasion attempts 'backfire' or simply do not work.

WHEN DOES PERSUASION WORK?

Before we begin to consider how persuasion works in general, it is useful to know about the 'ingredients' of successful persuasive efforts that have been identified in social psychology. That is, what elements need to be present for persuasion to happen? This section focuses on the three main features:

Source The origin of the persuasive effort – 'who'.

Message The content and method of the persuasive effort – 'what'.

Target The recipient or audience of the persuasive effort – 'to whom'.

1. The **source** of the message: who is trying to persuade? Perhaps a lecturer is attempting to get students to study, a cosmetics advertiser is promoting a new type of mascara, or a friend is trying to convince another friend to go to a party.
2. The **message** itself: what is the point and how does the message make its point? For example, perhaps a lecturer sends a strongly worded email to their students to get them to study, or the cosmetics advertiser designs a slick magazine advertisement to promote a mascara. Perhaps a friend sends a friendly text message with a picture of everyone else having fun at a party.
3. The **target** or **audience** of the persuasive attempt: who is receiving the message? In our examples, the relevant audiences are the students, the potential buyers of the mascara, and the friend sitting at home not attending the party.

Overall, the persuasion process can be characterized as the study of who says (or does) what, to whom, and what is the effect.

Yale approach to communication and persuasion Approach that considers the three factors that influence persuasion – source, message and audience.

This approach, which forms the basis of contemporary marketing and advertising to date, represents the **Yale approach to communication and persuasion**. Towards the end of the Second World War, Carl Hovland was contracted to work for the US War Department to examine how propaganda could be used to gain public support for the US war campaign. After the war, his research continued, which resulted in this well-known model of the factors involved in persuasion (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953). The approach emphasizes the importance of examining the characteristics of the person (or persons) presenting the message, its contents, and the characteristics of the person (or persons) who receive it. In particular, Hovland et al. identified four steps in persuasion – attention, comprehension, acceptance and retention. The various outcomes (opinion change, perception change, emotion change and action change) depend on a complex interplay between the source, message and recipient. We will now outline what social psychologists know about the contribution of the factors identified by the Yale approach.

The source

Imagine you are watching a debate about climate change on TV. On one side are climate scientists who use scientific data to argue that climate change exists and puts the world in imminent danger. On the other side are representatives from a large oil company who argue that climate change is a myth, instead arguing that there have always been phases of heating and cooling in global temperatures. Regardless of your views on climate change, which side of the argument should be the most persuasive? To give another example, when choosing a new skin care product, would you be persuaded by an advertisement depicting an attractive or an unattractive celebrity? Clearly, the source of the message matters. Research has demonstrated that the source's attractiveness, likeability and similarity to the target, perceived credibility, expertise and trustworthiness are all important determinants of the success of a persuasive attempt.

Attractiveness, likeability, and similarity

Unsurprisingly, if a message source is perceived to be attractive, it will be more persuasive. The reason for this is quite logical - imagine looking at a skin care product featuring an attractive and healthy skinned model. When people look at such advertisements, they tend to imagine that if they themselves use the product, they will become more attractive just like the model. In a more general sense, attractiveness is persuasive. This effect was demonstrated experimentally by Eagly

and Chaiken (1975), who asked attractive and unattractive people to walk around and request that students sign a petition. The attractive persuaders were successful 41 per cent of the time, but the unattractive persuaders were only successful 32 per cent of the time. It appears that people are also more persuaded by emotional arguments made by attractive rather than unattractive people (Chaiken, 1979; Dion & Stein, 1978).

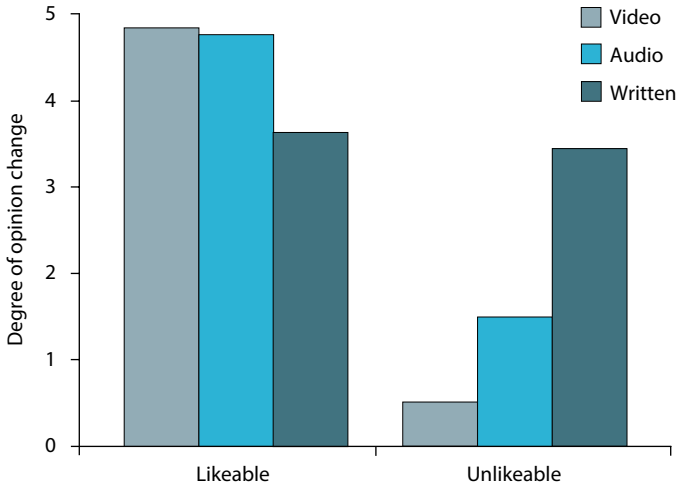

FIGURE 6.1 Attitude change (persuasion) achieved by likeable and unlikeable communicators

Source: Chaiken and Eagly (1983). Copyright © 1983 by American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

Other findings suggest that likeable people are particularly effective in eliciting persuasion via video and audio messages. Chaiken and Eagly (1983) gave participants persuasive messages from communicators who seemed likeable or unlikeable. Likeability had been experimentally manipulated by means of another passage in which communicators said that they liked the University of Toronto – where the participants were studying – more or less than their former university, the University of British Columbia. Of course, these statements made the communicator seem more and less likeable, respectively. In two studies, they found that the unlikeable communicator was just as persuasive as the likeable communicator in writing, but much less persuasive in audio and video messages (see Figure 6.1). Why might this be the case? Chaiken and Eagly found that people thought less about the communicator in written communication, and more about them in the audio and video conditions. Thus, being able to hear and/or see the source can, to some extent, distract us from the message and towards the characteristics of the source. Depending on the social context, then, communicator likeability can play a disproportionate role in determining how much a person will be persuaded.

Indeed, source attractiveness, be it physical or social attractiveness, appears to be a powerful persuasive technique and so, unsurprisingly, is one that advertisers are adept at exploiting (see also Chaiken, 1979; Chaiken & Eagly, 1983). One only needs to consider a few familiar advertisements on TV to understand the power of attractiveness in advertising (Figure 6.2).

Mark_Mook_Fotografie/Pixabay

FIGURE 6.2 Attractiveness sells Research has demonstrated that attractive sources are generally more persuasive than unattractive sources. So, it is not surprising that advertisers exploit attractiveness in their campaigns.

Attractive celebrities advertise anything from washing powder to cosmetics, to prestige cars. The assumption behind the use of such people in advertising campaigns is that attractive, likeable and popular examples are persuasive and so influence the extent to which consumers want to buy the product. Social psychological evidence suggests that this is indeed an effective technique (e.g., Chaiken, 1979; Chaiken & Eagly, 1983). It is so effective that everyday persuaders have a fairly good idea of how attractiveness can be exploited to persuade other people. For example, Vogel, Kutzner, Fiedler and Freytag (2010) demonstrated that people anticipate the success of a persuasive attempt largely based on the attractiveness of the persuader. They are also able to exploit attractiveness in attempts to persuade others.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Do you think that persuader attractiveness will have the same effect on all recipients? That is, will attractive people tend to persuade everyone? Later on in the chapter, we will discuss the notion of processing motivation – the extent to which people are motivated to process a message – and the influence of various different types of cues, such as persuader attractiveness, on different 'types' of persuasive targets. Take a look at the literature and try to understand when attractiveness 'works' and when it might sometimes be a less effective tool of persuasion.

Another persuasive feature related to attractiveness is the extent to which the source is seen as *similar* to the self. We tend to see people who are similar to ourselves as more *likeable* (see Chapter 7) and we are generally more persuaded by people we like (Petty, Cacioppo & Goldman, 1981). We also tend to be more influenced by people who are members of our own group, probably because we remember these messages better (Haslam, McGarty & Turner, 1996; van Knippenberg & Wilke, 1992; Wilder, 1990; Wood, 2000). For example, a study by Mackie, Gastardo-Conaco and Skelly (1992) asked student participants to read a persuasive speech about euthanasia or gun control. The speech was said to be from a student at their own university or another university. Results showed that the students were persuaded by the speech that supposedly came from a person within their own institution but were not persuaded when exactly the same speech was said to come from someone in a different institution. Familiarity – something that is strong within groups and weaker between groups – is persuasive. However, this is not to say that people will accept any old message as long as it comes from within one's own group. For example, Mackie, Worth and Asuncion (1990) asked participants to read both weak and strong arguments from within the group and found the stronger messages to be more influential, suggesting that people do process the content and quality of messages from within the group. However, the same study demonstrated that participants were equally dissuaded by strong and weak messages from outside the group, suggesting they did not pay much attention to the content. Therefore, group familiarity appears to be an important predictor of persuasion. Other theorists have argued that the perceived validity of social information in general is largely determined by a perceiver's belief that it comes from a self-relevant group. Such a group is more likely to be a reliable and qualified source of information about social reality (Haslam et al., 1996; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). This perspective can also explain the finding that persuasion tends to be strongest from within the group.

Further, people who act in a similar way to ourselves (e.g., similar gestures) or who mimic our own gestures tend to be more persuasive (e.g., Tanner, Ferraro, Chartrand, Bettman & van Baaren, 2008). For example, van Baaren, Holland, Steenaert and van Knippenberg (2003) demonstrated that a confederate waitress received significantly larger tips when she mimicked her customers (e.g., by repeating their order to them verbatim) than when she did not (e.g., by paraphrasing). Thus, the waitress was arguably more persuasive in getting tips if she mimicked the customer. In another study, van Baaren, Holland, Kawakami and van Knippenberg (2004) found that participants who had been mimicked by the experimenter performed more prosocial acts such as picking up pens the experimenter had dropped, or giving to a charity suggested by the experimenter (see Duffy & Chartrand, 2017 for a review of the associations between mimicry and prosocial behaviour). Again, the sales industry is good at exploiting this knowledge. Salespeople are often trained to mirror and mimic their customers to increase the possibility they will make a sale. It should also be noted that the opposite of mimicry can actually reduce persuasion. For example, Lewinski, Tan, Fransen, Czarna and Butler (2015) found that sneering when another person smiles in response to a funny advertisement can reduce the persuasiveness of the advertisement. Also, similarity does not always produce the most influence. Where matters of taste are concerned, people are more influenced by similar others, but when the issue is more about facts and being right, dissimilar sources can be more influential (Goethals & Nelson, 1973). So, if you were asked who was Britain's best prime minister, you would be more likely to be swayed by the input of a friend who shares your own political outlook and might be likely to respond like you. However, if you were asked how many prime ministers there had been, you might be more likely to listen to a dissimilar source.

Perceived credibility, expertise and trustworthiness

As has been demonstrated in a range of studies, sources who appear to be expert or competent are more persuasive than those who lack credibility (e.g., Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; Tormala, Brinol & Petty, 2006; Verplanken, 1991; Wu & Shaffer, 1987). You will notice that fitness professionals often advertise exercise equipment, dentists (and people with great teeth) advocate toothpaste, and sportspeople advertise sporting goods. This kind of advertising works because people tend to see fitness professionals as qualified to endorse exercise products and so on. Because people are deemed to have the expertise to comment on certain products, we take their comments more seriously (see also Tormala & Clarkson, 2007).

Findings show that people are also more persuaded by others they perceive to be trustworthy. In particular, if we see someone as having an ulterior motive, or perhaps suspect that they are actively attempting to manipulate us, we are less likely to be persuaded (e.g., Walster & Festinger, 1962). Related to this, we are also more likely to be persuaded when we see someone as acting against their own self-interests (Eagly, Wood & Chaiken, 1978; Wood & Eagly, 1981). We view such people as sincere and therefore more trustworthy. A study by Eagly et al. (1978) demonstrates this phenomenon. Participants were asked to listen to a political speech in which a person accused a large company of polluting a river. Some of the participants were told that the speaker was a pro-business candidate addressing a group of company supporters and some were told that the speaker was a pro-environmental candidate addressing an environmental protection group. Findings revealed that the pro-business candidate was more persuasive. Why?

Eagly et al. argued that the candidate seemed the most sincere and trustworthy because they were perceived to be acting against their own interests.

Many other variables can influence how trustworthy a persuader appears. For example, Miller, Maruyama, Beaber and Valone (1976) found that people who talk quickly are judged to be more intelligent, trustworthy and credible and are therefore more persuasive. Also, recent exposure to a non-credible message increases people's susceptibility to more trustworthy persuasive sources (Tormala & Clarkson, 2007). In a twist on the 'mere exposure effect' discussed in Chapter 4, repeated exposure to a message can increase the perceived credibility of the source and thus the likelihood of being persuaded (Fragale & Heath, 2004). Repetition of a message can also make it appear more true (Arkes, Boehm & Xu, 1991; Moons, Mackie & Garcia-Marques, 2009), or make the brand name seem more 'famous' and therefore more credible (Campbell & Keller, 2003).

Although the credibility of the source is an important determinant of persuasion, the cause of non-credible communicators is not entirely lost. Over time, they may become persuasive. As time goes on, and it is harder to recall who presented the message, people's opinions may be less and less determined by source credibility. Instead, they are persuaded by the message itself. This phenomenon is called the **sleeper effect** (Pratkanis, Greenwald, Leippe & Baumgardner, 1988). For example, you may have read a piece of information in a downmarket tabloid or weekly celebrity gossip magazine and immediately dismissed it because of its dubious source credibility. However, over time, you may forget where you read the information and instead be persuaded by its content. This effect was originally demonstrated by Hovland and Weiss (1951). They asked student participants to read an article arguing that nuclear submarines were safe. Half of the participants were told that the article was written by Robert Oppenheimer (the scientist in charge of developing the atomic bomb) and the other half were told that the message source was the Soviet news agency Pravda. Bearing in mind the political tensions of the time, the second source was much less credible than the first. Unsurprisingly, the participants were immediately most convinced by the credible source. However, in a second phase of the study that took place four weeks later, the participants were tested again and the advantage for the credible source disappeared (see Figure 6.3). In particular, the participants in the non-credible source condition found the article as convincing as the participants in the credible source condition. The sleeper effect is a robust phenomenon, having been demonstrated in a wide variety of contexts and experiments (Crano & Prislin, 2006; Kumkale & Albarracín, 2004), but if participants are reminded of the message source before the second phase of the study, the effect disappears (Kelman & Hovland, 1953). It has also been recently demonstrated that when people focus their attention on the source instead of the message, there is a sleeper effect for the message source (Albarracín, Kumkale & Poyner-Del Vento, 2017). That is, over time persuasion increases when credible sources present weak arguments. However, when the focus is on the message instead of the source, a traditional sleeper effect tends to emerge (i.e., persuasion increases when a strong message is presented by a less credible source).

Sleeper effect
A message that is not persuasive at first (probably due to concerns about source credibility) becomes persuasive over time as the source is forgotten.

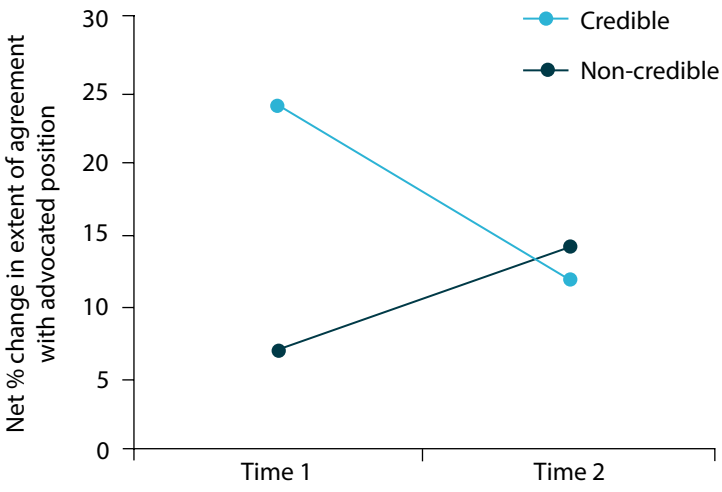

FIGURE 6.3 The sleeper effect People are most convinced by credible sources. However, over time, non-credible sources can be persuasive because people lose their memory for the source.

Source: Data from Hovland and Weiss (1951)

TIME TO REFLECT

Think about the public exposure related to the personal life of English cricketer Ben Stokes, who was arrested on suspicion of being involved in an affray near a nightclub in 2017 (he was later found not guilty of the offence in court). The incident caused him to lose his lucrative contract with the footwear company New Balance. Is Ben Stokes now less qualified to advertise these products?

The message

The source of the message matters, and what the message contains (and how it is presented) are also vital ingredients that determine the success of persuasion. First, there are many aspects of the message itself that affect its persuasiveness. Here, we will talk about the length of the message, its consistency with the audience's opinion, its repetition, the extent to which it arouses fear and whether it is factual or emotional.

Message length

It is not simply the case that longer or more detailed messages are more persuasive than shorter messages. In many aspects of social psychology, the relationship between variables is complex, and the link between message length and persuasion is no exception. For instance, findings show that long messages are more effective if they are strong, but they are less effective if they are weak (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Wood, Kallgren & Preisler, 1985). Also, long, weak messages are less impactful than short, strong messages (Friedrich, Fetherstonhaugh, Casey & Gallagher, 1996). If a person is trying to influence another, they are perhaps best off writing a quick message with a few key, strong points rather than writing a longer message where the important details can easily get lost. All else being equal (understanding, complexity and familiarity), a 'strong' message typically includes objective facts that are central to an issue, whereas a 'weak' message provides information that is peripheral to the issue. Message strength can also be influenced by the source's likeability, credibility and consistency.

Consistency

The consistency between a persuasive message and the target's original attitude is also an important factor in determining the message's persuasive effectiveness. For example, it would be difficult to persuade an animal rights activist to endorse animal testing for cosmetics, or a committed Conservative Party supporter to vote for the Green Party. If a message is too distant from the audience's attitude, it is likely the message will be ignored. One demonstration of this effect comes from a study by Liberman and Chaiken (1992; see also Sherman, Nelson & Steele, 2000), who found that coffee drinkers were more likely to reject a message arguing for a link between caffeine consumption and ill-health than were non-coffee drinkers. The message was incompatible with participants' love of coffee, so perhaps participants simply did not want to know about it. This tendency to ignore messages that are inconsistent with our attitudes can have important consequences. For example, one consequence may be that people's attitudes become more extreme over time. If people ignore evidence that disconfirms their opinions but keep interacting with like-minded individuals (and thus accrue more information that is consistent with their attitudes), then original attitudes may strengthen (Pomerantz, Chaiken & Tordesillas, 1995).

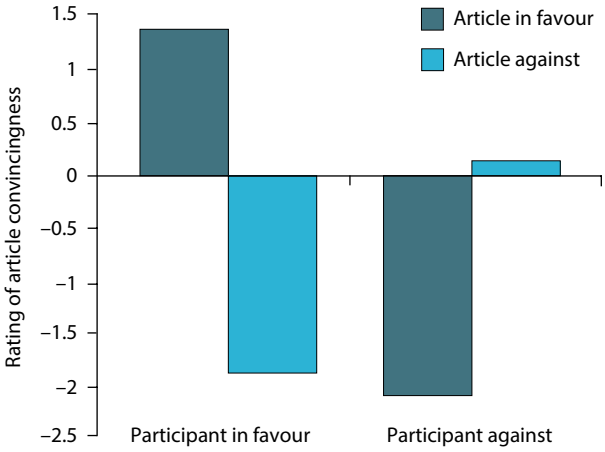

FIGURE 6.4 Consistency of message with existing attitudes Participants tend to rate an article as more convincing when it is consistent with their original opinion.

Source: Data from Lord et al. (1979)

A classic study by Lord, Ross and Lepper (1979) demonstrates this phenomenon. In this study, students who were either opposed to or in favour of the death penalty were asked to read about the results of two fictional studies. One study suggested that the death penalty reduces homicides and the other showed no reduction. After reading about the studies, participants rated how much their attitudes towards capital punishment had changed. Results showed that the participants who were against capital punishment at the beginning of the study became more opposed to capital punishment after reading the two articles. The participants who were originally in favour of capital punishment became more in favour. Their ratings of the articles' strength were also influenced by prior attitudes towards the topic (see Figure 6.4). Here, participants who were originally in favour of capital punishment rated the 'in favour' article as stronger than the 'against' article. On the other hand, participants who were originally against capital punishment rated the 'against' article as stronger than the 'in favour' article. This latter finding points to another interesting fact – viewing both sides of an argument does not always make people more impartial. People tend to think that arguments from their own 'side' are stronger, so reading or hearing arguments from the other 'side' is not always going to change people's minds.

EXPLORING FURTHER

It is often said that we are living in a post-truth age where facts have lost their appeal and so-called 'fake news' and other types of misinformation, such as conspiracy theories, can easily take hold. Concerns about the spread of misinformation reached a peak during the 2016 US presidential election and the UK vote regarding its membership of the European Union (Brexit). Social media were rife with stories that were simply not true and even some of the communications from political campaigns contained misinformation. Misinformation spreads quickly (Kucharski, 2016), and one study found that one in four US citizens visited a fake news website in the run up to the 2016 US election (Guess, Nyhan & Reifler, 2016). How and why does fake news attract people? Use Google Scholar or PsycINFO to search for terms such as 'misinformation', 'conspiracy theory', and 'fake news'. Are some people more susceptible to misinformation than others? Look up search terms such as 'bullshit receptivity' and 'analytic thinking'. Will people believe anything they read, or are they likely to believe information that confirms what they already believe? In the study mentioned above by Guess et al., most fake news websites were pro-Trump and were mainly visited by Trump supporters. What does this mean about the types of information that people consume when they are making political decisions? Use search terms such as 'echo chambers' and 'information bubbles' to learn more.

Misinformation False or inaccurate information that is deliberately intended to deceive.

Repetition

When you are watching commercial TV, no doubt you get sick of seeing the same advertisements over and over again. However, there is good reason why they are shown so often. Evidence suggests that messages become more effective if they are repeated. For advertisers, the logic behind this is that people need to be exposed to messages on multiple occasions in order for them to be remembered and recalled. Of course, this does not mean that information needs to be repeated endlessly and indiscriminately. This would be expensive and would waste a lot of

Rawpixel/Pixabay

valuable advertising money and resources. However, it appears that advertisements are most effective when people are exposed to them two to three times per week (Tellis, 1987). This echoes other findings suggesting that the simple repetition of information can make it appear more true (Arkes et al., 1991).

However, the picture is a bit more complex than it originally seemed to be. Specifically, there is some evidence to suggest that repeated exposure to messages is most effective when people are already somewhat familiar with what is being advertised and have had an initially positive response to the advertisement (Campbell & Keller, 2003). Repeated advertising of a brand new product is not as effective. In this case, a certain level of familiarity is important if repeat advertising is going to work. Also, there is some evidence to suggest that the effects of advertisements can plateau or even 'wear out' with repeated exposure (Campbell & Keller, 2003; Craig, Sternthal & Leavitt, 1976; Hughes, 1992). Repetition is, therefore, more likely to be an effective persuasive technique when the repetition is carried out with some level of variety. Advertisers may need to change their advertisements, techniques or presentation periodically in order to maximize their chances of success. For example, online advertising often uses animated banner advertising to capture consumers' attention. Compared to static banner advertising, repeated advertisements that use animations do not suffer the same levels of attention loss and are therefore more effective (Lee, Ahn & Park, 2015).

Fear arousal

Messages can also be persuasive by making people feel bad. In particular, many persuasion attempts are designed to arouse fear in recipients. Readers in the UK will be familiar with 'stop smoking' advertisements featuring death-related images and graphic depictions of the hazards of cigarette smoking. By making people feel scared, vulnerable and aware of their own mortality, advertisers hope that people will quit smoking (see the Social Psychology in the Real World box) and most of the time this works (Leventhal, Watts & Pagano, 1967; O'Hegarty, Pederson, Yenokyan, Nelson & Wortley, 2007). Fear campaigns like this are used extensively in health-related advertising, for example. Health advertisements at the height of the swine flu outbreak in 2008/09 encouraged people

to 'catch it, bin it, kill it' (sneeze, that is) or else put others at risk of catching swine flu. In efforts to raise awareness of skin cancer, Australian government skin cancer prevention advertisements depicted people being cut open on the operating table to remove melanomas. Safe sex advertisements, especially prominent in the 1980s, depicted the grim reaper bowling down men, women and children in a bowling alley. Such advertisements were designed to make people fear AIDS and therefore practise safe sex. At a less extreme level, think of advertisements for products like washing machine anti-limescale tablets, which forecast the complete destruction of the domestic washing machine if this product is not used. Fear is a powerful tool of persuasion, and no doubt you can think of many other examples where fear is used in advertisements and more generally in everyday persuasion attempts.

But how much fear is enough to persuade people? Some research shows that fear-arousing advertisements improve memory for the advertised product (Akram, McClelland & Furnham, 2018) and also increase persuasion (de Hoog, Stroebe & de Wit, 2007; Leventhal et al., 1967). For example, one set of studies demonstrated that people were more inclined to buy products after they had viewed advertisements containing death-related material (Das, Duiven, Arendsen & Vermeulen, 2014). Arguably, these 'killer ads' trigger fears that may be alleviated by buying things. Furthermore, another study found that watching a film about the devastating effects of climate change increased people's concerns about climate change and their motivation to act (Howells, 2011). However, it is clear that fear-inducing advertisements do not always work. After all, people still smoke and engage in other risky or unhealthy behaviours. People still sunbathe and not everyone buys anti-limescale products for their washing machines. Aronson (1997) argued that fear is sometimes ineffective in persuasion because people often engage in *denial* when the problem seems unsolvable. Findings suggest that this denial can be avoided, and fear again becomes persuasive when a tangible solution to the problem is offered (Devos-Comby & Salovey, 2002; Witte, Berkowitz, Cameron & McKeon, 1998). For example, a person may be more likely to stop smoking if information about help and support is presented in the advertisement. Others have argued that an 'inverted-U' curve hypothesis may explain how much fear is most effective in persuasion attempts. In particular, Janis (1967; see also McGuire, 1969) argued that a moderate amount of fear was most effective to induce attitude change. This is probably because people are simply not motivated to process the non-threatening message. Also, high levels of fear may lead people to be too anxious and therefore sink into denial, so again the persuasion attempt is ineffective. However, if people are moderately fearful, they are likely to be swayed by a message because there is a reasonable balance – people take notice of the message because it is moderately threatening, but not so threatening as to induce panic (see also Block & Keller, 1995). If the problem seems solvable, people will do something about it. More recent research (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009) demonstrated much the same point about advertising campaigns encouraging people to reduce their carbon footprint in order to mitigate the threat of climate change – a subject to which we return in Chapter 14.

Research has shown that fear-arousing advertisements have unintended effects. For example, one study showed that people who viewed advertisements including fear-inducing content (vs. those who did not), were more likely to forget the content of the TV programme that directly followed the advertisement (Akram et al., 2018). It is also important to consider the ethics of fear-inducing advertising campaigns. This has been a controversial issue for several decades. Is it acceptable to expose people – some of whom are from vulnerable groups – to messages that are frightening? Some scholars argue that it is acceptable in order to prioritize the wellbeing of the whole population. Fear works, so why not exploit this to improve people's lives? On the other hand, other scholars argue that it is inherently unethical and therefore unacceptable (Bayer & Fairchild, 2016).

EXPLORING FURTHER

In 2010, a UK government advertising campaign, called 'Act on CO_2', was withdrawn after many viewers complained that it exaggerated the risks associated with climate change. Use an online search engine to find the campaign (try searching by combining the terms 'UK', 'climate change', 'advertising', '2010' and 'campaign'). You can view the advertisement and read about the story online (e.g., the BBC News website has a story online about it). This costly fiasco highlights another danger of fear campaigns – they can risk a backlash, especially when the message being proposed is one that a vociferous minority of the population do not want to hear. Based on the findings in this chapter, how would you modify this campaign?

A less extreme version of the fear technique is known as the **scarcity technique**, whereby the persuader makes the item of interest more attractive by convincing the target that the item is rare. You will no doubt be familiar with the common sales term 'while stocks last', or 'hurry, only one left at this price', based on which people rush to buy the product in question. Many of you will have shopped, or attempted to shop, on a Black Friday where limited deals are promised on highly desirable products. There is evidence that this technique works. For example, Worchel, Lee and Adewole (1975) gave participants a chocolate chip cookie and asked them to taste and rate it on a number of scales. In one condition, there were only two cookies in the jar but in the other condition, the jar had ten cookies. Therefore, in the first condition, the cookies were a scarce resource. Worchel et al. found that people rated the cookie as more desirable where they were asked to take a cookie from the two-cookie jar, that is, when the cookies were a scarce resource. There is a darker side to the use of the scarcity technique. Kristofferson, McFerran, Morales and Dahl (2017) ran a series of studies in which they exposed participants to a promotional advertisement for a desirable product. The researchers varied the advertisement so that the product was either available in a high (control) or low (scarce) quantity. There was another condition where product quantity was not mentioned. After exposure to the advertisement, the participants moved on to what they believed to be an unrelated study where they had the opportunity to behave aggressively (e.g., playing a violent video game). The results revealed that exposure to the advertisements using scarcity promotions led to more aggressive behaviour than the other conditions. A mechanism underlying this effect appeared to be that consumers viewed other shoppers as potential threats who might prevent them from buying the desirable product. Those who viewed the scarce product advertisement also displayed higher levels of testosterone, which has been linked to higher levels of aggression (see Chapter 13).

Scarcity technique
A persuasive technique emphasizing (truthfully or not) the rareness of the item in question, thus increasing its attractiveness to the target.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

How to get people to stop smoking

Over the past 15 years, public health advertisements in the UK and elsewhere have increasingly featured morbid scenes of early graves for smokers and the grieving children of parents who have died of smoking-related health problems. More common perhaps are advertisements featuring scenes of clogged arteries, smokers being 'hooked' through the mouth by fishing lines and advertisements showing blood clots in smokers' dissected brains. These scare tactics are common features of health-related advertising and their effects are viewed as very powerful. The statistics

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also speak to the success of anti-smoking campaigns, with the lowest levels of smoking ever recorded in Britain in 2016.

One relatively recent innovation in the campaign against smoking is to place warnings on cigarette packets. In such warnings, smokers are notified in bold, block letters about the health risks associated with smoking. For example, smokers are told that 'smoking causes heart disease', 'smoking harms your unborn baby' and 'smoking causes impotence'. The rationale for using such warnings is that an immediate and explicit reminder of the hazards of smoking will encourage people not to light up. Does this work? As we noted earlier, smoking has definitely reduced over the past few years, but social psychological research provides an interesting twist. Hansen, Winzeler and Topolinski (2010) conducted an experiment where they first measured how important smoking was to the self-esteem of 39 student smokers. After this, the smokers were divided into two groups. One group was asked to look at two cigarette packs that featured death-related warnings, while the other group was asked to look at cigarette packs that featured death-neutral warnings such as 'smoking makes you unattractive'. Next, all the participants rated their attitudes to smoking.

Findings showed that in students for whom smoking was important to their self-esteem, those who viewed packets with death-related warnings reported *more* (not less) positive attitudes to smoking compared with those who looked at neutral warnings. The opposite pattern of results was found in participants for whom smoking was not vital to their self-esteem. In other words, for some smokers, smoking makes them feel good – they may feel that it is an important aspect of their identity or they think it makes them look cool. For these people, death-related warnings do not have the intended effect and actually make them want to smoke more.

Questions

1. Can you think of reasons why the death-related warnings do not work for the smokers who derive a self-esteem 'boost' from smoking? (Hint: check out terror management theory by using the Index of this textbook or by looking online. The theory states that self-esteem is a vital buffer against the fundamental fear of death.)
2. What kinds of messages might be more effective on these people?
3. What are the potential implications of these findings for anti-smoking campaigns? After all, many people who smoke genuinely enjoy it and are happy to be smokers.

Factual appeals versus emotional appeals

Sometimes, persuaders arm themselves with the objective facts in order to sway others. For example, advertisers may present a convincing set of statistics or a list of specifications and technical details. At other times, however, advertisers present their own or others' opinions, which are more subjective. These two different types of persuasive messages are often termed **factual** and **evaluative advertising**. Both are effective, but which works best? Seemingly, the optimal approach depends on the target of the persuasive appeal. Research suggests that analytical and well-educated people are more persuaded by rational appeals (Cacioppo, Petty & Morris, 1983), while disinterested or disengaged audiences are more swayed by their liking for the persuader (Chaiken, 1980). The effectiveness of factual versus evaluative appeals also depends on how a person came to have their attitudes in the first place. Specifically, if an attitude was acquired through emotion, they can be changed by other appeals to emotion. However, attitudes acquired via facts and information are less likely to be changed by emotional appeals and more likely to be changed by factual appeals (Edwards, 1990; Fabrigar & Petty, 1999; Petty & Wegener, 1998).

Factual advertising
Advertising that uses objective facts to persuade the consumer.

Evaluative advertising
Advertising that focuses more on subjective opinions and evaluations.

Obviously, advertisers use both types of appeals and often use both in the same advertisement. Perhaps this intuitively takes into account the fact that different people are influenced by different types of appeals, but also that advertisers are covering all options. In other words, if

an advertisement makes someone feel like the product is good, and at the same time convinces people of the facts, how can it fail to persuade?

The method

Several features of the way in which the message is sent can influence its effectiveness. For example, whether an argument is presented as one-sided or two-sided is often important. Also, when the vital information is presented (first or last) can determine how much effect it has on people's attitudes and behaviours. Further, the channel of delivery is important. We will discuss each of these factors in turn.

Two-sided messages

People are often presented with more than one argument at once. For example, think of members of a jury who hear both the arguments of the prosecution and the defence and ultimately need to decide on the guilt or innocence of a defendant. Thus, persuaders need to know how to deal with competing arguments to enhance the effectiveness of their own messages. One way to do this is to present a two-sided argument; that is, persuaders can present information in favour of an idea, attitude or product, but at the same time present information that is against the intended persuasion attempt. Two-sided arguments are particularly effective if people are aware of opposing arguments (e.g., Jones & Brehm, 1970). For example, a study by Werner, Stoll, Birch and White (2002) demonstrated the effectiveness of a recycling campaign that used a prominent counterargument. On a university campus rubbish bin, students were asked not to dispose of aluminium cans but instead take them to a recycling bin located on an upstairs floor. When the message on the bin was accompanied by an acknowledgement of the major counterargument against taking the cans upstairs (that it was, of course, inconvenient to have to go upstairs to recycle the cans), recycling behaviour reached 80 per cent. This was a significant increase from a condition where no such message was given, and demonstrates that presenting people with a counterargument makes a persuasive attempt more effective. Similar effects occur in the court room where a defence case appears more credible if lawyers pre-empt some of the information that will be used by the prosecution (e.g., 'of course he has stolen cars in the past but he is a good man and there is no evidence that he committed this crime'). In presenting conflicting information before it is intended to do damage and therefore 'stealing the thunder' of the prosecution, the damage is somewhat controlled (Williams, Bourgeois & Croyle, 1993).

In a similar vein, the way in which a message is framed can influence its meaning, and therefore how it is received. For instance, if a message is framed as 'reverse discrimination', it is less likely to be accepted and is viewed less favourably than if it is presented as 'equal opportunities' (Bosveld, Koomen & Vogelaar, 1997). It is more effective, therefore, to promote minority presence in a particular profession by advertising that the employer values equal opportunities rather than advertising that they have a 'quota place' for a particular minority group. Also, if a message with positive outcomes is presented in terms of gain (e.g., gains in wellbeing through exercise), it will be more successful than if framed in negative terms (e.g., losing weight through exercise). Thus, the way a message is presented and framed influences its ability to persuade its target.

Blend Images/Dave and Les Jacobs

FIGURE 6.5 Effectiveness of two-sided arguments Werner et al. (2002) found that campaigns to promote recycling were most successful when arguments in favour of recycling were accompanied by an acknowledgement of the inconvenience of recycling.

Primacy and recency effects

Imagine you are competing in a talent contest and there are 20 performers in the lineup (Figure 6.6). Would your chances of winning be better if you performed near the beginning, in the middle or closer to the end? Would people remember you better if you went first, would you be 'lost' if you went in the middle, or does being the most recent performance in the judges' minds give you the best chance of success? Social psychological research gives us some idea of what to expect.

Getty Images/Blend Images/Hill Street Studios

FIGURE 6.6 Do first or last impressions count? If you are one of 20 performers in a lineup, would your performance stand out more if you went first or last?

Primacy effect Research finding suggesting that information presented first is persuasive.

Some research suggests that information presented first is most persuasive (Asch, 1946). For example, Asch showed that if a person is described as 'intelligent, industrious, impulsive, critical, stubborn and envious', people tend to form more positive impressions of them in comparison to when they are described as 'envious, stubborn, critical, impulsive, industrious and intelligent' (Asch, 1946). In the first example, the positive information benefits from a **primacy effect**: it is presented first, remembered better and therefore has the most influence on the recipient. On the other hand, the second example presents negative adjectives first and therefore these have the most influence. These original findings were recently examined again by Sullivan (2018) who presented individuals with descriptions of other people either as 'fun, witty, and vicious' or 'vicious, witty and fun'. Sullivan reasoned that the primacy effect observed by Asch might be due to communicative expectations that the most important information is always presented first. To test this potential explanation, Sullivan varied whether the information about the person was given by another person (activating the expectation that the most important information is presented first), or by a computer (where such an expectation should not exist). The same primacy effect observed by Asch emerged across five separate studies. However, there was no evidence that this depended upon communicative expectations.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Here is the list of traits used by Asch (1946). List 1 presents the positive traits first and List 2 presents the negative traits first. Asch found a primacy effect, such that participants reading List 1 liked the hypothetical person more than those who had read List 2. Try it on your friends. Ask, say, 20 friends to read one of the lists (10 for each) and ask them one question: How likeable do you think this person is on a scale of 1–7? Tally up and calculate a mean for each group. Did your results replicate the effect observed by Asch?

List 1	List 2
intelligent	envious
industrious	stubborn
impulsive	critical
critical	impulsive
stubborn	industrious
envious	intelligent

Source: Asch (1946)

This primacy effect has practical implications. First, people tend to side more with the arguments they hear first in speeches (Miller & Campbell, 1959), and if you are standing for office, it is better to appear at the top of a ballot sheet than anywhere else (Moore, 2004). Also, people tend to prefer the first option they are presented with in terms of making everyday product choices (Carney & Banaji, 2008). Further, primacy effects are important in informing our impressions of people (e.g., Anderson, 1965b; Hendrick & Costantini, 1970; Jones, Rock, Shaver, Goethals & Ward, 1968). In many cases, it does appear that first impressions count.

However, other research suggests that information presented last (that is, most recently) can also be persuasive. For example, De Bruin (2005) found that in the Eurovision Song Contest, competitors tend to receive higher scores the later they appear in the programme. In particular, this **recency effect** occurs if there is some chance that people will have forgotten the information they were presented with first. For example, if people are presented with some material and then wait a week before receiving another set of material, they are likely to forget the first set of information and be influenced by the material presented most recently (Miller & Campbell, 1959). This effect was originally demonstrated by Luchins (1957), who found that participants remembered the information they were presented with first (primacy effect) in cases where all the information was presented in immediate succession. However, when there was a delay mid-way through presenting the information, participants remember the most recent information best (recency effect).

Recency effect
Research findings suggesting that information presented last is persuasive.

Of course, a complex set of factors influence whether we can expect a primacy or recency effect to occur. For example, primacy effects are more common, even after a delay, if the first set of information stimulates thinking (Haugtvedt & Wegener, 1994). It is thought that the primacy effect is also more common generally, because accommodating new information means changing one's initial impression – first impressions are strong and people are at their most attentive when making initial impressions (Anderson, 1975). However, if the recipients are asked to make a commitment straightaway after the most recent information is presented, then a recency effect is more likely to occur. Therefore, it is not easy to answer the questions

posed at the beginning of this section unless we know more about the way in which the acts are performed in the talent contest. However, all things being equal, primacy effects are the most powerful and, therefore, most of the time, it seems that it is better to go first (you might want to read over the coverage of primacy and recency effects in impression formation in Chapter 3, where conclusions are largely similar).

The channel

The mode through which the information is presented (e.g., face to face, video, TV advertisements, flyers and so on) is an important factor in determining the effectiveness of persuasive attempts. There is no denying that TV advertisements can be powerful. For example, in the US presidential primaries (the first stages of electing the president), the candidates who advertise the most tend to do much better than those who spend less on their TV advertising campaigns (Grush, 1980). As we saw earlier, repetition of a message can make it more powerful, so repeated presentation of the same TV advertisement is likely to have a significant effect on voting behaviour. However, more specific features of persuasive attempts can influence their impact. Chaiken and Eagly (1976) argued that for information that is difficult to comprehend, written information should be the most persuasive because this medium gives people the opportunity to carefully work through and consider the message at their own pace. To test this, they compared the influence of messages presented in written form, or via TV and audio channels (Chaiken & Eagly, 1983). In general, they found that video presentations were the most effective in bringing about attitude change. However, when the message was more complex or difficult to understand, written material had the most impact. So, although common wisdom may suggest that the visual impact of TV advertising is the most powerful, in fact a message's impact depends more on the type of information presented (see Figure 6.7). Advertisers can make good use of this information to increase the effectiveness of their campaigns. In particular, presenting an advertisement in video format takes away targets' opportunity to consider the message, and so they may rely more on simple cues presented in the message that are not part of the central argument. As we will see later, simple cues can often be persuasive in effecting attitude change.

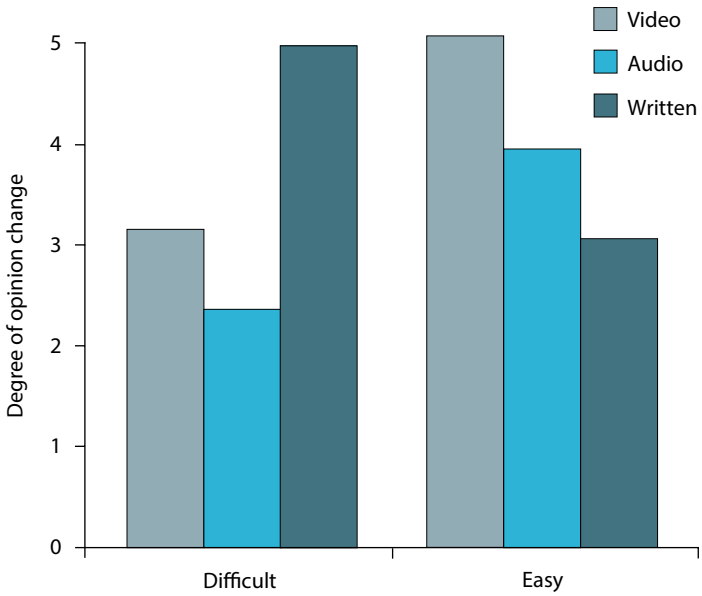

FIGURE 6.7 Attitude change for easy or difficult messages The effectiveness of 'easy' messages is enhanced by video presentation but for difficult messages, written presentation is the most persuasive.

Source: Chaiken and Eagly (1983). Copyright © 1983 by American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

TIME TO REFLECT

Chaiken and Eagly's study was conducted in 1983. A lot has changed since then, and advertisers now have a wealth of new advertising media to use, such as websites, social networking sites and SMS messaging. Take a look Chaiken and Eagly's results. Do you think that 'easy' and 'difficult' messages would be differentially effective in these new media?

The target or audience

The effectiveness of a persuasive message is also strongly influenced by features of the target or audience at whom the persuasive attempt is aimed. For example, individual differences, such as gender, age, self-esteem and personality traits, can influence the effectiveness of persuasive messages. We will now briefly discuss some of these target features that influence persuasion processes.

Gender

Overall, research tends to suggest that women are more susceptible to persuasion than men. Some researchers argue that perhaps this is because women and men have different social roles. In particular, women are said to be more *cooperation focused*, whereas men are said to be more focused on *independence* in their interactions with others (Eagly & Carli, 1981; Eagly, Wood & Fishbaugh, 1981). Thus, women are perhaps more *socially sensitive* or receptive to the influence of others than men. Other researchers suggest that gender differences in persuasion are also dependent on the nature of the influence attempt (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2002). In particular, findings show that women tend to be more persuaded by face-to-face appeals than other types of written messages, like emails, whereas men show no difference. Again, perhaps women's cooperation focus makes it more difficult to resist persuasive appeals that are made in person.

However, other findings suggest that women are only more influenced than men when the topic of discussion is something with which males are more familiar (Sistrunk & McDavid, 1971). Because most messages used in attitude research typically involved male-oriented topics, and most experimenters were male, these findings raised an interesting point – perhaps the experiments had not been gender fair. If topics had been more gender neutral, then results may not have suggested that women are more sensitive to influence than men (Eagly & Carli, 1981). Of course, this treads into somewhat controversial territory. People tend to think of being 'easily persuaded' as being a negative trait, much like being of low intelligence. A lot of controversy surrounds the cultural fairness of intelligence tests, so perhaps considerations of persuasiveness suffer the same biases. A study by Eaton (2009) showed that gender differences in persuasion were largely dependent on the salience of gender norms. Specifically, making people aware, or 'priming' female gender roles, leads to reduced attitude strength in women and therefore openness to attitude change. Taking this idea further, Eaton, Visser and Burns (2017) found that priming female gender roles led participants – both female and male – to process information more superficially when compared to male gender role primes. Researchers conducting research on persuasion should therefore be mindful of the gender salience in the research context.

Also, to add more complexity to the picture, the persuasive context influences gender differences in persuasion. For example, Carli (1990) showed that the nature of the speaker (tentative vs. assertive), their gender (male vs. female), the nature of the audience (male vs. female) and different combinations of these variables influence message success. For example, in this experiment, when the speaker was female and tentative, male targets were more susceptible to persuasion than female targets. However, male speakers were equally influential, irrespective of how assertive or tentative they were. The relationships between gender and persuasion are quite complex and much about the link between gender and persuasion is still unknown.

Age

Research suggests that late adolescents and young adults are the most susceptible to persuasive messages, so it perhaps unsurprising that these groups are targeted heavily by TV advertisers (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989; Sears, 1986). It is argued that this demographic is more easily persuadable because, compared to adults, younger people have less stable attitudes and show less resistance to authority, so their attitudes and behaviours are easier to influence and change. Indeed, some countries ban advertising aimed at children, probably for this reason. They are

seen to be in the 'impressionable years' and therefore more easily influenced (Sears, 1986). However, other research suggests a different developmental pattern of persuasion. Specifically, Visser and Krosnick (1998) found that people in early and late adulthood were more receptive to persuasive messages than those in middle adulthood. They argued that susceptibility to persuasion is high in early adulthood but decreases as people get older. Furthermore, people become less susceptible to persuasion because their accumulated experiences increase their resistance. In early adulthood, core attitudes, values and beliefs are formed, and in later adulthood, people become more susceptible to persuasion again so that people are the least susceptible in middle adulthood. Finally, Visser and Krosnick argued that people are generally open to attitude change across the life span, but core attitudes and values (secured in early adulthood) tend to be resistant to change throughout the remainder of the life span.

There is evidence to support all these hypotheses to some extent (e.g., Tyler & Schuller, 1991; Visser & Krosnick, 1998). Again, however, the nature of the message also matters. For example, Fung and Carstensen (2003) showed that older adults were more influenced by messages that focused on meaningful goals (e.g., 'Capture the special moments'), but that younger adults showed no preference for such messages. Older adults appear to be more susceptible to financial fraud than younger adults (Kircanski et al., 2018). Therefore, like gender, the relationships between age and persuasion are complex.

Personality and individual differences

Need for cognition (NFC) An individual's need to think, assessed by self-reports of how much they enjoy and derive fulfilment from thinking.

Need for cognitive closure (NFCC) The extent to which an individual is closed-minded, desiring quick and/or certain answers to questions and resistant to ambiguity or disconfirmation.

Research into the personality characteristics that influence how prone a person is to persuasion has also yielded quite complicated results. Indeed, many other social contextual variables can influence relationships between personality/individual differences variables and persuasion. However, one common factor that researchers have investigated is people's **need for cognition (NFC)** – the extent to which they derive fulfilment and enjoyment from thinking about things (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Haugtvedt & Petty, 1992; Jarvis & Petty, 1996). In general, people who have a greater need to evaluate information are more likely to express evaluative opinions when they look at new things (e.g., 'I would never wear that') and will also think more about the information presented. The likelihood that they will be influenced by a message will therefore depend on the strength of the message (Cacioppo, Petty & Morris, 1983). Weaker messages have lesser impact on people who score high on the need to evaluate information. Later in the chapter, we will talk more about how individual differences in thinking styles are related to persuasion. **Need for cognitive closure (NFCC)** also influences persuasion (Kruglanski, Webster & Klem, 1993), with people who score higher on NFCC being generally less susceptible to influence, arguably because they are more cognitively closed-minded and essentially less persuadable simply because they have a predisposition to 'make their minds up' early on. Similarly, people who show a preference for consistency (Cialdini, Trost & Newsom, 1995) and show high attitude importance (Zuwerink & Devine, 1996) are less likely to be persuaded than people who score low on these variables.

EXPLORING FURTHER

This is a shortened version of the NFCC scale. Complete it for yourself. Are you high, medium or low in NFCC? Do you think of yourself as someone who is susceptible to influence and advertising?

	Strongly disagree					Strongly agree
I don't like situations that are uncertain.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I dislike questions that could be answered in many different ways.	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Strongly disagree					Strongly agree
I find that a well-ordered life with regular hours suits my temperament.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel uncomfortable when I don't understand the reason why an event occurred in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel irritated when one person disagrees with what everyone else in a group believes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
When I have made a decision, I feel relieved.	1	2	3	4	5	6
When I am confronted with a problem, I'm dying to reach a solution quickly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I would quickly become impatient and irritated if I could not find a solution to a problem immediately.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I don't like to be with people who are capable of unexpected actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I dislike it when a person's statement could mean many different things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find that establishing a consistent routine enables me to enjoy life more.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I enjoy having a clear and structured mode of life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I do not usually consult many different opinions before forming my own view.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I dislike unpredictable situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I don't like going into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Source: Reprinted from Roets and Van Hiel (2011b). Copyright © 2011, with permission from Elsevier

Mood

Messages can also be persuasive by making people feel good. Good feelings can promote persuasion partly because such feelings enhance positive thinking and positive thinking increases impulsive decision making (Bodenhausen, 1993; Mackie & Worth, 1991; Moons & Mackie, 2007). On the other hand, when people are in a good mood, they are also more likely to associate the message with positive feelings and this promotes influence. This effect was demonstrated in a study by Janis, Kaye and Kirschner (1965), who showed that people were more persuaded by a message they were reading if they were able to snack and consume a soft drink while they were reading. Other research reveals more complex effects. For example, Bless, Bohner, Schwarz and Strack (1990) found that participants put in a sad mood were influenced by counterattitudinal messages when they were strong (not weak), but that happy participants were equally influenced by strong and weak messages (see also Schwarz, Bless & Bohner, 1991; for reviews, see Petty & Briñol, 2008, 2014). As we saw in Chapter 4, emotion affects cognition, and, in particular, being in a sad mood can make people more inclined to think rationally and reach accurate conclusions (see also Bless & Burger, 2017).

HOW DOES PERSUASION WORK?

Above, we highlighted some of the source, message and audience characteristics that make persuasion a likely outcome. These findings are useful and a whole range of individuals, groups and companies can use these techniques to maximize the impact of their persuasive attempts. However, as informative as these findings are, they tell us little about exactly how persuasion happens. That is, how are certain types of messages successful at influencing people? How does it come about that some people are more influenced than others? Researchers have attempted to uncover the psychological processes underlying persuasion by proposing and testing social psychological theories of persuasion.

Two of the most prominent models are the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986b; Petty & Wegener, 1999) and the heuristic-systematic model (Chaiken, 1980, 1987; Bohner, Moskowitz & Chaiken, 1995). Although these approaches differ in many respects, they both propose that persuasion occurs via two processes, which depend on the different types of persuasive cues that are given attention by the target – thus they are **dual process models**. Both models assert that the source of the message and the message itself play distinct roles in persuasion and that the outcome of a persuasive interaction also depends on the target or receiver's motivation and ability to process information. Note, however, that not all models of persuasion are dual process models. In particular, one more recent model called the *unimodel* offers an alternative to the dual process models, asserting that the two processes proposed by the dual process models are functionally equivalent in the persuasion process (e.g., Kruglanski et al., 2006; Kruglanski & Thompson, 1999). Although this model provides a competing perspective on persuasion, the dual process models still tend to dominate scientific thought.

Dual process model A model that advocates for two processes leading to a psychological outcome. For example, the elaboration likelihood model and heuristic-systematic model assert that there are two routes to persuasion.

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM)

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of persuasion asserts that variations in the nature of persuasion outcomes are dependent on the likelihood that recipients will engage in elaboration of (or thinking about) the arguments relevant to the issue. This model argues that people focus on different features of a persuasive message depending on the level of cognitive effort they give to the information relevant to the persuasive subject (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986b). Specifically, when people think carefully about a persuasive message and pay special attention to the argument quality, they are attending to the **central cues** of the message. Central cues are features of the message such as scientific arguments, consumer reports and expert arguments. For example, imagine you are booking a holiday abroad and you want to ensure you find a good hotel. You may consult a website such as Tripadvisor.com to browse numerous reviews of various hotels, comments from travel organizations and independent travellers' comments to make the most informed choice about where to stay. You think about the reviews in some depth, compare them to other reviews and keep a note of the pros and cons of your potential choices. You make your choice after careful consideration of the information you have. Central cues take a significant effort to process, so whether this route is successful depends on people's ability and motivation to process the cues (see Figure 6.8). When people are persuaded by such cues, they are said to be influenced via the **central route to persuasion**. The central route represents the persuasion process that occurs when elaboration of the persuasive message is high. Some research suggests that a specific site in the brain is activated during the elaboration of expert arguments (Klucharev, Smidts & Fernandez, 2008). Specifically, fMRI studies demonstrate that the caudate nucleus is activated, which is an area of the brain involved in trustful behaviour, reward processing and learning. More generally, 'feeling persuaded' has been associated with increased activity in specific regions of the temporal lobe and prefrontal cortex (Falk et al., 2010; see Cacioppo, Cacioppo & Petty, 2018 for a review of the neural correlates of persuasion).

Central cues Persuasive features of a message, such as message quality and scientific arguments, that require processing or elaboration by the target.

Central route to persuasion Processing of a message that occurs when people have the ability and motivation to attend to the message carefully and evaluate its arguments, leading to people being persuaded by central cues.

On the other hand, when people attend to the more superficial characteristics of a message instead of the argument quality, they are attending to the **peripheral cues** of the message.

Peripheral cues Persuasive features of a message, such as models, slogans and jingles, that do not require substantial processing.

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FIGURE 6.8 The power of central cues Doing a lot of research for your upcoming holiday (e.g., checking customer reviews, hotel credentials and so on) means that you are being influenced by central cues involving a high level of elaboration according to the ELM.

Consider the same example of booking a holiday. Here, being persuaded by peripheral cues means that you would be paying more attention to photographs of happy vacationers frolicking in the pool, or images of relaxed people drinking cocktails in beachside bars rather than detailed written accounts of the quality of the breakfast buffet or the airport parking facilities. The slick graphical design on holiday websites is also likely to grab your attention. These cues do not take a great deal of cognitive effort or motivation to process, so they can be successful under the right conditions. Being persuaded by these types of cues involves the **peripheral route to persuasion**. The peripheral route represents the persuasion process that occurs when elaboration of the persuasive message is relatively low.

Peripheral route to persuasion Processing of a message that occurs when people do not have the ability and motivation to attend to the message carefully and evaluate its arguments, leading to people being persuaded by peripheral cues.

It is possible to see the difference between these approaches to persuasion in advertisements for a similar product. For example, some car advertisements feature arguments about the car's performance, speed and other specifications that give the potential buyer a good overview of the product they are going to get. Other car advertisements display attractive models draped over cars with breathtaking scenery in the background, or other more sophisticated imagery. Computer companies often opt for slick advertisements with lots of pictures of the product, while others focus more on the technical specifications. Clearly, both routes to persuasion are effective and this is why advertisers choose to adopt them in different forms and for different audiences (Figure 6.9).

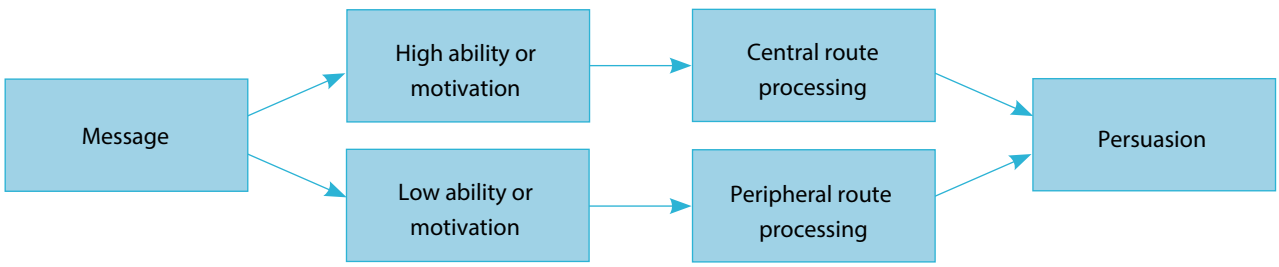

FIGURE 6.9 The elaboration likelihood model According to this model, persuasion can occur through either of two routes. The central route involves the persuasive target considering the quality of the argument. The peripheral route involves reliance on superficial cues. The route to persuasion depends on the target's ability and motivation to process the persuasive message.

The heuristic-systematic model (HSM)

The heuristic-systematic model (HSM), while also arguing for two distinct processes to persuasion, puts things slightly differently. Instead of using the terms 'central' and peripheral', the HSM uses the terms 'heuristic' and 'systematic' to describe conceptually similar processes. According to this model, **systematic processing** occurs when targets actively scan and process the arguments put forward in a message. **Heuristic processing** occurs when people do not carefully consider the arguments. Instead, they resort to cognitive 'shortcuts' or heuristics to process the message. One reason to process a message through the heuristic rather than systematic route is because the task of processing a lot of information is just too difficult (Chaiken, 1987). Heuristics make the task simpler. For example, instead of listening carefully to a person make a detailed argument about the nuances and effects of gender differences and judging the argument's reliability, it is easier to resort to the truism that men and women are simply different and that gender differences are here to stay. That is, the reliability of the message is judged by applying a simple rule, or heuristic, instead of attending carefully to the message itself.

Systematic processing
Processing of a persuasive message that occurs when people pay careful attention to a message.

Heuristic processing
Processing of a persuasive message that occurs when people use heuristics or cognitive 'shortcuts'.

So, while the ELM and HSM are slightly different in the way they see the two processes occurring during persuasion, they both argue for two distinct routes to persuasion – one involving more complex processing or elaboration of a message and the other involving a more instinctive, simplistic processing. People use the central/systematic route to persuasion when they attend thoughtfully to a message, but use the peripheral/heuristic route when they do not attend thoughtfully to a message or use simple cognitive shortcuts to deal with the message. We mentioned the unimodel of persuasion earlier, which offers an alternative to the dual process models, asserting that the two processes proposed by the dual process models are functionally equivalent in the persuasion process (e.g., Kruglanski et al., 2006; Kruglanski & Thompson, 1999). It is proposed that in each route, receivers of messages try to reach conclusions about what views to hold, using any information available to them. Although the dual process models argue that different kinds of evidence are used in the two routes (peripheral cues and central cues), the unimodel asserts that there is just one process of reasoning involved. The processes may appear to be distinct because studies on the ELM and HSM have typically involved simple peripheral cues versus complex arguments, and are not therefore equalized with respect to complexity. Kruglanski and Thompson argue that if these cues are equalized, they will be seen to be processed in similar ways and there is no need to study persuasion as two separate processes. You are probably thinking this all sounds a bit complicated and, indeed, research is yet to clearly tease apart these different explanations. Thus, we maintain our focus on the ELM and HSM and will now consider how each of the proposed routes to persuasion (central/systematic and peripheral/heuristic) work and the factors that influence which route of persuasion people use.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Spend some time on Google Scholar and find some research that relates to Kruglanski's unimodel of persuasion. What insights does it offer that are different from the dual process models?

Factors determining the processing route

The first key factor that determines the route to persuasion is the persuasive target's *ability to focus*. When a person is distracted, preoccupied, interrupted or under time pressure, it is difficult for them to concentrate on the central cues of persuasion because they require a significantly

greater amount of processing than peripheral cues. As such, when people lack the ability to focus, they are more likely to attend to peripheral cues (Petty, Wells & Brock, 1976). Petty et al. (1976) empirically examined how the ability to focus can influence how people process a persuasive message. They exposed students to either a weak or a strong argument in favour of an increase in student fees. The strong message argued that an increase in fees would improve teaching by allowing the institution to hire better teachers; it would also make class sizes smaller. On the other hand, the weak message talked about the more aesthetic benefits of increased fees, such as being able to employ more gardening staff and making the campus more attractive. In addition to this manipulation, some students listened to the messages without any distractions, while others listened to the messages alongside performing a distracting task. Participants were then asked to rate their overall agreement with the increases in student fees. Results showed that the undistracted participants were more persuaded to agree with an increase in student fees after having listened to the strong arguments rather than those who had listened to the weak arguments. However, the distracted participants agreed approximately equally in the weak and strong message groups (see Figure 6.10). Petty et al. argued that the distraction manipulation works to inhibit the dominant cognitive response to a message. If a dominant response is to develop counterarguments (a negative response), distraction will enhance persuasiveness because the target will not be able to generate counterarguments. However, if the dominant response is to develop pro-arguments (a positive response), distraction will reduce its persuasive impact because people will not have the resources to develop pro-arguments. So, both favourable and unfavourable responses to a persuasive attempt can be disrupted by an inability to focus.

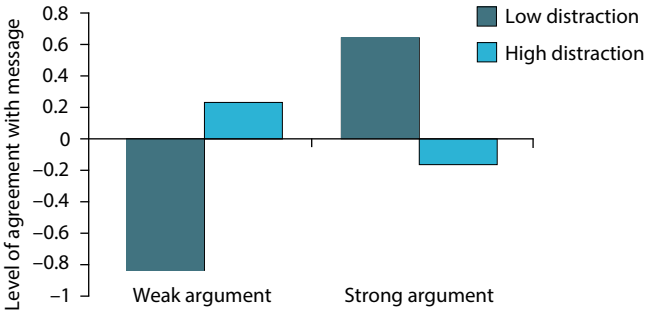

FIGURE 6.10 The effects of message strength and distraction on persuasion Participants who were not distracted were more persuaded by the strong arguments than the weak arguments. Participants who were distracted tended to be persuaded by both messages. Can you think of a way that advertisers might use these findings?

Source: Data from Petty et al. (1976)

Factors other than distraction can influence people's ability to process a message. For example, Petty et al. (1976) found that in a standing position, people were less persuaded by an argument in favour of increasing student fees than they were when they were lying down. They argued that a standing position enables resistance to persuasion by facilitating the generation of negative responses, while lying down promotes susceptibility to persuasion because it inhibits negative responses. Furthermore, Cacioppo, Sandman and Walker (1978) found that participants who were conditioned to increase their heart rates were more resistant to persuasion. Arguably, increased heart rate facilitates message processing and enables targets to process and reject the message.

The second key determinant of the successful route to persuasion is whether the persuasive target has the *motivation to process*. Sometimes, people are just not involved in the message or are simply not interested in the issues relevant to the persuasion attempt. Without this motivation to process, findings show that people are more likely to rely on peripheral cues to persuasion such as a message's length or speed (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991; Smith & Shaffer, 1991). In general, as a person's level of involvement in the topic increases, the motivation to engage in central/systematic processing increases. The motivation to process a message can also be influenced by the recipients' level of need for cognition (NFC), which we briefly discussed earlier. NFC is an individual differences characteristic that reflects people's tendency to engage in and enjoy effortful thought (Briñol & Petty, 2005). People who display higher levels of NFC generally have a higher elaboration motivation and will therefore be more influenced through the central/systematic route to persuasion (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein & Jarvis, 1996; Haddock, Maio, Arnold & Huskinson, 2008; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986b).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Like need for cognitive closure, a person's level of NFC is strongly associated with their susceptibility to persuasion. In your own time, complete the NFC scale (by rating your agreement with each statement) and see how you score. Do you see yourself as someone who is easily persuaded? What types of cues do you think you are most sensitive to? The items with an asterisk will need to be reverse scored (see Chapter 2 for how to do this). Once you have done this, tally up your score and you have your overall NFC score. The maximum score is +72 and the lowest score is –72.

	Strongly disagree								Strongly agree
I would prefer complex to simple problems.	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking.	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
Thinking is not my idea of fun. *	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
I would rather do something that requires little thought than something that is sure to challenge my thinking abilities. *	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
I try to anticipate and avoid situations where there is likely a chance I will have to think in depth about something. *	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
I find satisfaction in deliberating hard and for long hours.	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
I only think as hard as I have to. *	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
I prefer to think about small, daily projects to long-term ones. *	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
I like tasks that require little thought once I have learned them. *	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
The idea of relying on thought to make my way to the top appeals to me.	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems.	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
Learning new ways to think doesn't excite me very much. *	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
The notion of thinking abstractly is appealing to me.	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
I would prefer a task that is intellectual, difficult and important to one that is somewhat important but does not require much thought.	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4

	Strongly disagree								Strongly agree
I feel relief rather than satisfaction after completing a task that required a lot of mental effort. *	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
It's enough for me that something gets the job done; I don't care how or why it works.*	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
I usually end up deliberating about issues even when they do not affect me personally.	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
I prefer my life to be filled with puzzles that I must solve.	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4

Source: Cacioppo, Petty and Kao (1984). Reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd (http://www.tandfonline.com)

Other factors also determine how people deal with persuasive messages. For example, our mood at the time of a persuasive attempt can influence how the message is processed (see Mackie & Worth, 1989; Petty, Cacioppo & Kasmer 1988; Wegener, Petty & Smith, 1995). Sometimes, being in a sad mood can encourage a more peripheral/heuristic processing depending on the ambiguity of the information (Bohner, Chaiken & Hunyadi, 1994). Being in a good mood (e.g., by listening to nice music) can also enhance elaboration (Bruner, 1990; Gorn, 1982). The perceived credibility of the source is also an important factor (Tormala & Briñol, 2015), as is the perceived importance of the issue relevant to the persuasion attempt (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994).

It is also important to note that while both routes of persuasion are effective, they affect people in different ways in different situations. This may sound rather vague, but as you now know, persuasion is a complex phenomenon so it is not always easy to give straight answers. For example, a message concerning an issue that is important to an individual will be effective in persuading them so long as they have the time and resources to pay attention. It is also the case that the same cue can be processed in different ways depending on motivation and ability. For example, glossy hair on a shampoo advertisement, while typically being processed as a peripheral cue to attractiveness, can also be processed centrally because it contains information about how effective the shampoo is (so long as we are prepared to assume that the model has actually used it). More generally, persuasion via the peripheral/heuristic route is typically not as effective as the central/systematic route in changing attitudes and behaviours in the long term. Peripheral route persuasion often results in superficial or temporary attitude change, while central route persuasion leads to longer lasting attitudinal and behavioural change (Chaiken, 1980; Mackie, 1987; Petty, Haugtvedt & Smith, 1995).

TIME TO REFLECT

Imagine you are an advertising executive and are involved in designing advertisements for perfume, cars, 'alcopops' and energy drinks. What would your advertisements look like for each of the different products and why? How do the features of your advertisements map onto the routes of persuasion identified by social psychologists?

WHAT CAN PEOPLE DO TO PERSUADE OTHERS?

There are several tactics that people can use to be more effective persuaders. For example, they can ingratiate themselves to their target, make small requests before plunging in with a more substantial request, make a large and unrealistic request before making the intended smaller request, or 'lowball' targets with hidden costs to a persuasive request. All are effective in eliciting persuasion. We will discuss these interpersonal persuasive tactics briefly in turn.

Ingratiation and reciprocity

Ingratiation
A persuasive technique that involves making the persuasive target like you in order to persuade them.

One way to persuade people to agree with you or do what you want them to do is to first make them like you. A person may **ingratiate** themselves to their persuasive target by agreeing with them, flattering them or simply being nice to them before making the persuasive attempt (Smith, Pruitt & Carnevale, 1982). This can be effective, but it may also backfire if the ingratiation is too obvious. Too much flattery, for example, can make people suspicious that the flatterer has ulterior motives. If indeed the flatterer intends to influence the target, then the target has good reason to be suspicious (Gordon, 1996).

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Reciprocity principle
A persuasive technique that involves 'doing a favour' for a person before asking them to do something for you.

A similar technique is to use the **reciprocity principle** to one's advantage and rely on the accepted convention that people will treat others as they are treated themselves (Gouldner, 1960). In other words, if someone receives a favour from another person, they are likely to return that favour. This is a useful technique in persuasion because doing something nice for another person creates good relations and activates the reciprocity principle. People feel obliged to do something nice for the other person. The persuasive target is receptive to the idea of returning the favour and is therefore more likely to be persuaded when a request is made. Indeed, one study showed that people were more likely to be persuaded if

they had received a favour beforehand than if they had been given no favour (D.T. Regan, 1971; see also Whatley, Webster, Smith & Rhodes, 1999). Of course, failure to return a favour can result in heavy social penalties. For example, a person who does not abide by the reciprocity principle is likely to be deemed a 'freeloader' or a 'sponger' for taking a social favour but not paying it back (Cotterell, Eisenberger & Speicher, 1992). People generally want to avoid these sorts of labels and are also likely to feel guilty if they do not return a favour, so the norm of reciprocity is a powerful tool of persuasion (Carlsmith & Gross, 1969). We discuss the reciprocity principle further in Chapter 7 when we cover the topic of close relationships.

Door-in-the-face technique

The **door-in-the-face technique** is closely related to the reciprocity principle and involves the persuader making a large, unrealistic request, which is almost certainly refused, and then making a smaller, more realistic request (Cialdini, 1984). This technique works because the persuader makes a concession by accepting the target's refusal of the first request. The target then feels obliged to also make a concession and is therefore more likely to be persuaded by the smaller, more realistic influence attempt. For example, imagine a charity worker asks you to give a £50 donation to an appeal. You initially say 'no', feeling that this is a lot of money to part with out of the blue, but then concede to buying £5 worth of raffle tickets for the same appeal. This is known as the door-in-the-face technique because the persuasive target first slams the door in the face of the persuader but then opens it a tiny bit to concede to a smaller request (Reeves, Baker, Boyd & Cialdini, 1991).

Door-in-the-face technique
A persuasive technique that involves the persuader making a large and unrealistic request before making a smaller, more realistic request that is likely to be successful.

Cialdini et al. (1975) demonstrated the strength of this technique in a study where university students were asked if they would like to chaperone a group of juvenile delinquents on a trip to the zoo. Unsurprisingly, 83 per cent of the students said 'no' to this request. However, for students who had first been asked if they would like to participate in an intensive counselling programme for juvenile delinquents lasting two years, 50 per cent agreed to chaperoning the juveniles on the zoo trip. The door-in-the-face phenomenon can therefore be a powerful technique of persuasion. Cialdini et al. (1975) also argued that this technique capitalizes on a contrast effect. The small request seems reasonable in contrast to the larger intrusive request, so it is seen as much more acceptable. You will notice this technique used extensively in sales contexts. For example, a salesperson may show a prospective TV purchaser a very expensive, top-of-the-range TV before showing them cheaper (but still expensive) models. The customer is likely to see the latter options as more reasonable than they normally would, because they appear to be a nice contrast to the wallet-busting options first presented. Note, however, that this technique only occurs if the second request is made by the same person as the original request. If two requests are made by two different people, the door-in-the-face technique will not work. It also helps if the second request is made immediately following the first, rather than following a delay, as Guéguen (2014) found with requests for blood donations.

That's-not-all technique

The **that's-not-all technique** also capitalizes on the reciprocity principle and involves the persuader giving the person something that will further convince them to comply with the request. The technique involves offering a person a product at a high price, not allowing them to respond for a short while, and then offering them a better deal by offering another product or lowering the price. Using the example above, the TV salesperson might show the customer an expensive TV the customer is likely to refuse. However, if the salesperson later shows the

That's-not-all technique
A persuasive technique that involves the persuader making a request but afterwards throwing in some 'added extras' to pressure the target to reciprocate.

customer a cheaper TV, or mentions that the TV also comes with a free satellite set-up and Netflix subscription, then the new TV probably seems better value, and perhaps the customer is also more likely to feel that they owe the salesperson something for 'throwing in' some extras. When this that's-not-all technique is used, people are more likely to be persuaded by the influence attempt (Burger, 1986).

Burger (1986) demonstrated that this procedure induces greater compliance than in a control condition where participants were given the better deal in the first place. However, research demonstrates that this effect is dependent on the size of the initial request. For example, Burger, Reed, DeCesare, Rauner and Rozolis (1999) found that, compared to a control group who received only the final request, participants who were presented with an initial request that was significantly larger than the final request were less likely to comply, whereas those who were presented with only a marginally smaller initial request were more likely to comply. Further, Pollock, Smith, Knowles and Bruce (1998) demonstrated that this technique only occurs when people consider an offer instinctively.

Foot-in-the-door technique

Foot-in-the-door technique
A persuasive technique in which a person makes a small and unobtrusive request before making the larger request of interest.

The **foot-in-the-door technique** involves persuaders first making a small and relatively unobtrusive request before making the intended (larger) request. The persuader gets their foot in the door with a reasonable appeal, making it more likely that they will succeed with the request they are most interested in. Freedman and Fraser (1966) demonstrated this effect by asking members of a community to display large ugly sandwich boards in their front gardens depicting the message 'Drive carefully'. Only 17 per cent of the targets agreed to do this, but for participants who had agreed to display a small 'Be a safe driver' sign in their windows two weeks earlier, 76 per cent agreed to the more obtrusive request. Again, we see a powerful tool of persuasion. Indeed, one review suggests that this technique can even persuade people to eventually comply with large requests such as becoming organ donors (Saks, 1978). Recent empirical work suggests that the technique definitely has pro-social consequences. It can be used to reduce aggressive driving (Guéguen, Martin, Silone & David, 2016), and to increase bystanders' tendency to respond after a crime (Guéguen, Martin, Silone & Pascual, 2016).

However, this technique does not always work. In particular, if the first request is too small and the second request is too large, the foot-in-the-door technique will not be effective because the link between the two requests is broken (Foss & Dempsey, 1979). One way around this is for the persuader to 'build up' to the larger request by beginning with a small request, making another (slightly larger) request and so on, until the large and intended request is made (Goldman, Creason & McCall, 1981). A good example of this is how many charities work. They may begin by asking for a signature on a petition, follow that up with a request for a small donation, then finish with the intended request of a monthly direct debit donation. The charity giver is likely to agree to this graded persuasive attempt.

Lowball tactic

Lowball tactic
A persuasive technique that involves the persuader changing the terms of the agreement during the interaction by introducing hidden costs. The target accepts the change because they have already made a commitment to the action.

Using the **lowball tactic**, the persuader changes the terms of the agreement during the interaction by introducing hidden costs. For example, imagine you are shopping for a holiday at your local travel agency and you find the perfect getaway for what looks like a reasonable price. You are about to make the purchase but at the last minute the salesperson lets you know about a special 'sun tax' that will add £100 to the cost of your holiday. In this example, you have been lowballed. In other words, you were told about a

hidden cost after you had committed to the holiday. What do you do? Research suggests that you would still go ahead and purchase the holiday. Specifically, once people are committed to an action, they are more likely to stick to their decision, accept the sunk cost and go ahead.

The power of this technique was demonstrated in a study by Cialdini, Cacioppo, Bassett and Miller (1978). In this experiment, half the participants were asked to participate in an experiment. If they agreed (56 per cent), they were told it began at 7am; 95 per cent turned up. The same request was made of a control group, although these participants were immediately told about the 7am start; only 24 per cent agreed to participate.

Message framing

Imagine a food advertising campaign promoting a product as either 'five per cent fat' or '95 per cent fat free'. Which one would you buy? Despite both options being exactly the same, research suggests that people tend to opt for the latter, because of the way the message is expressed. This phenomenon is called the **framing effect** (Levin, Schneider & Gaeth, 1988; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) and occurs because people are generally averse to a loss. A product that is 95 per cent fat free is a gain compared to the product with 5 per cent of an undesirable attribute. To give another example, people are more likely to enroll for a course where a discount is available for early registration vs. a penalty for late registration. Framing effects tend to be greater as people get older (Erber, 2013). What implications might this have for healthcare and financial decisions that people make in their old age?

Framing effect
Decisions are affected by whether their outcomes are presented as gains or avoided losses.

WHEN PERSUASION DOES NOT WORK

Even when the most powerful persuasive techniques are used, you can probably think of many occasions when persuasive attempts do not succeed. For example, most advertisements you see will not make you go out and buy a product, nor will the majority of political messages influence how you vote. In general, people are highly resistant to persuasion (Figure 6.11). If they were not, their attitudes (and behaviours) would be constantly changing, so it is just as well that people are able to resist most persuasion attempts. The next question to consider, therefore, is why are people so resistant to persuasion? Here, we will discuss a number of factors that enhance people's ability to stand firm in the face of even the most expert and accomplished efforts at persuasion.

TIME TO REFLECT

We have spent the majority of our discussion thus far on advertising and the techniques that salespeople use to convince people to buy things from them. Now think about political persuasion and the techniques that politicians use to convince their prospective voters. How do they use or adapt the techniques we have discussed in this chapter? What other persuasive techniques can you think of that are used by politicians but not discussed in this chapter? It may be worthwhile thinking of recent examples, such as US President Donald Trump, or politicians from the past. How have they been persuasive? Has anything changed in the ways that politicians attempt to persuade voters?

Reactance

When people are confronted with a persistent influence attempt, they often become annoyed and resentful of the effort to change their attitudes. For instance, when a persuader really puts on the pressure, for example a 'hard sell' salesperson, the target of the influence may become increasingly irritated and resentful. The net result – the target reacts against the message and ultimately adopts the completely opposite attitude to that of the intended persuasion attempt. This is the process of **reactance**. People can react strongly like this against blatant or persistent influence attempts because such attempts are direct threats to personal freedom. For example, the 'hard sell' salesperson is pushing a person to buy a product. Nobody likes to be forced to do something, or to have their personal freedom compromised, so the natural reaction is to defy the persuader and go one's own way. Also, nobody likes to have their self-image of an independent person challenged, so blatant persuasive attempts are often doomed to failure. Research has widely documented this phenomenon (e.g., Brehm, 1966; Rhodewalt & Davison, 1983; Rhodewalt & Strube, 1985), which is sometimes also called **negative attitude change**. In this sense, the persuasive attempt can really backfire on the persuader, who finds themselves confronting someone with a stronger attitude or a more defiant resistance to persuasion than before the influence attempt began (Tormala & Petty, 2002, 2004). Indeed, threats to personal freedom will often create a defiant response, sometimes known as a **boomerang effect** (Brehm & Brehm, 1981).

Reactance/ negative attitude change A negative reaction to an influence attempt that threatens personal freedom. This reactance increases resistance to persuasion.

Boomerang effect Lay term for reactance.

Prior knowledge/forewarning

When we are aware of a persuasion attempt, are we more able to resist it? For example, when we watch a political speech, we know that the politician would like to have our vote, but does awareness of this fact mean that they will be less successful? When a salesperson walks up to us and hands us a brochure, are we less likely to be persuaded to purchase their product? Some research suggests that the answer is 'yes'. Specifically, if people are forewarned about a persuasive attempt, they are less likely to be persuaded by the attempt than if they have no prior knowledge of the attempt (Cialdini & Petty, 1979; Johnson, 1994). Why is this the case? People are more resistant to persuasion after **forewarning** because the advance knowledge of a persuasion attempt activates several cognitive processes that are important for persuasion.

Forewarning Prior knowledge of a persuasion attempt that often renders the persuasion attempt less effective.

Kmiragaya/Fotolia.com

FIGURE 6.11 Saying 'no' Persuasion attempts do not always work and people simply say 'no'. Many factors influence people's resistance to persuasion.

For example, advance knowledge gives people the opportunity to develop counterarguments that render the attempt less successful. Also, people have more time to seek alternative facts and information that are counter to the persuasive message. The importance of the original attitude is also important (Krosnick, 1989; Petty & Cacioppo, 1979). That is, the benefits of forewarning are stronger when people consider the associated attitudes to be important than if the attitudes are seen as trivial. If a person has strong feelings about a topic, then being forewarned of an attempt to change their minds will arm them with the accessibility of their own attitudes to counteract the persuasion attempt.

Counterarguing

People can actively resist persuasion attempts by addressing and arguing against attitude-incongruent arguments directly. By being proactive and counterarguing against the persuasive attempt,

people are able to defuse persuasion attempts and, again, this renders such attempts less effective (e.g., Eagly, Chen, Chaiken & Shaw-Barnes, 1999). In one study, Eagly, Kulesa, Brannon, Shaw and Hutson-Comeaux (2000) asked students to listen to either 'pro-life' (anti-abortion) or 'pro-choice' (in favour of women's choice to have an abortion) messages delivered by a female communicator. The messages were consistent or inconsistent with the participants' prior attitudes ('pro-life' or 'pro-choice'). After listening to the message, participants were asked to list their thoughts throughout the experiment. Results revealed that participants had more opposing thoughts towards counterattitudinal messages and more supportive thoughts during the attitude-consistent messages. So, participants generated counterarguments against the messages that were inconsistent with their attitudes, but supportive arguments for the message that was consistent with their existing attitudes (see Figure 6.12). Therefore, one way that people resist counterattitudinal messages is to actively process the arguments and argue against them. In doing so, they provide strong 'self-defence' against persuasion attempts. Exposure to conterarguments can also sway people away from believing misinformation, which we discussed earlier in the chapter (Ecker, Lewandowsky, Jayawardana & Mladenovic, 2019). 'Debunking' misinformation is very challenging, but strong and detailed messages can help people resist this information (Chan, Jones, Hall, Jamieson & Albarracín, 2017).

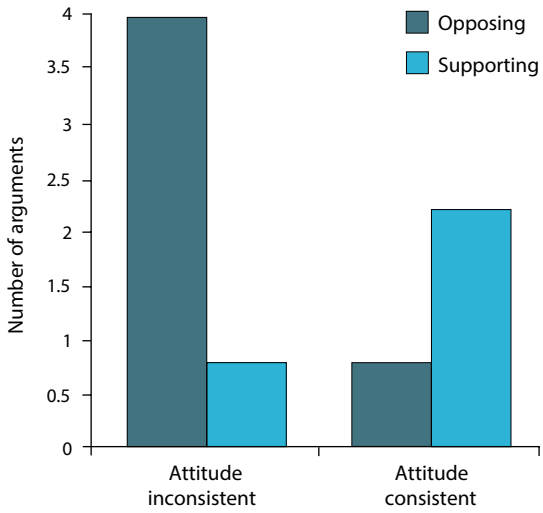

FIGURE 6.12 Resisting persuasion by generating counterarguments Participants reported thinking of more supporting arguments than opposing arguments when exposed to a message that was consistent with their pre-existing attitudes. However, those who were exposed to a message that was inconsistent with their pre-existing attitudes reported thinking of more opposing arguments than supporting arguments.

Source: Data from Eagly et al. (2000)

Attitude inoculation

In another important line of research, McGuire (1961, 1964) showed that it was possible to inoculate people against influence attempts by presenting them with weak counterattitudinal arguments before presenting them with a stronger influence attempt (e.g., a counterattitudinal message). In the same way that immunizations are designed to fight diseases, weaker arguments 'inoculate' people against stronger influence attempts. The individual is able to mount a defence and therefore becomes less susceptible to the persuasive attempt. McGuire demonstrated the effectiveness of **attitude inoculation** by presenting people with some cultural truisms (e.g., it is a good idea to brush one's teeth after every meal) and presenting a counterattitudinal message (e.g., experts say that too much brushing can damage one's gums). If no inoculation occurred, participants were persuaded by the attitude-incongruent message, but if participants had been first presented with a weak attack on their attitudes, they were much less persuaded. Also, if they were asked to write an essay refuting the mild attack, they were less susceptible to the stronger persuasive attempt.

Attitude inoculation Presenting people with weak attitude-inconsistent attacks prior to a stronger persuasive attempt helps people to resist the message. They are in a sense 'inoculated' against the stronger influence attempt.

McGuire and Papageorgis (1961) argued that this works because presenting targets with weak arguments helps them to generate counterarguments of their own, which in turn makes their attitudes more resistant to change. Another example was demonstrated by Bernard, Maio and Olson (2003b), who found that people who were first asked to write and then refute reasons for opposing equal opportunities were more resistant to anti-equality messages at a later time. Of course, this is not perfect and attitude inoculation will not always work. One example of where the effect falls away is when people think that their resistance to persuasion has been weak. On such occasions, people can become more susceptible to follow-up influence attempts (Tormala, Clarkson & Petty, 2006).

Avoidance

Another way to resist persuasion is simply to ignore or filter out information that is inconsistent with pre-existing attitudes, or information that you simply do not wish to engage with. By engaging in a process called **selective avoidance**, people direct their attention away from information that is inconsistent with their attitudes. For example, instead of exposing oneself to endless advertisements in between one's favourite TV programme, a person has the option of filtering out the unwanted advertisements and public messages by checking out what is on the other TV channels or by recording the programme and flicking through the advertisements. Likewise, people can attend to parts of speeches that support their attitudes and ignore the sections they do not wish to hear. This points to another interesting phenomenon – people are *more* likely to attend to messages that are consistent with their attitudes (Martin, Hewstone & Martin, 2003; Petty & Cacioppo, 1979). That is, while people are more likely to ignore or avoid counterattitudinal messages, they give pro-attitudinal messages more attention and thought. These two processes, in team with one another, help ensure the stability and strength of pre-existing attitudes.

Selective avoidance People's tendency to filter out information that is inconsistent with their pre-existing attitudes. This increases resistance to persuasion.

Attitude polarization People's tendency to evaluate mixed information in a way that strengthens pre-existing attitudes and makes them more extreme.

Biased assimilation People's tendency to evaluate counterattitudinal information as biased or unreliable.

Hostile media bias People's tendency to view counterattitudinal media as biased and untrustworthy.

Other means of resistance to persuasion

Other factors influence people's resistance to persuasion. Briefly, **attitude polarization** is the tendency for people to evaluate mixed information or messages in a way that strengthens their original attitudes and makes them become more extreme (Pomerantz et al., 1995). Also, the process of **biased assimilation** is people's tendency to evaluate attitude-inconsistent information as unreliable and less convincing than attitude-consistent information (Lord et al., 1979). Like other means of resisting persuasion, attitude polarization and biased assimilation protect people's original attitudes from new information designed to change those attitudes. Furthermore, people can protect their attitudes by questioning the source of the persuasive message if the attitude it presents is different from their own. For example, one common finding is that people accuse the media of being biased and therefore untrustworthy, particularly if they present a view contrary to their own. This **hostile media bias** increases resistance to persuasion and can mean that people reject even the strongest arguments (Duck, Terry & Hogg, 1998; Vallone, Ross & Lepper, 1985; see Perloff, 2015 for a review).

CRITICAL FOCUS

How do people understand persuasion?

Social psychologists know a lot about how people can be persuaded, the models that explain persuasion and the features of individuals that lead them to be more persuaded. However, for all psychologists know about persuasion, they know less about the sense that people make of this important social phenomenon. What motives, thought processes and intuitive concepts affect observers' judgements of messages' persuasive power and, conversely, of people's susceptibility to persuasion? In other words, what commonsense representations do people have about persuasion? Do they have any conscious knowledge of the tools they use to persuade people and how they themselves are persuaded? This is an intriguing gap in the literature on persuasion and attitude change.

A good starting point to address this issue is research on the **third-person effect (TPE)**, which is the tendency for people to assume that persuasive attempts have more influence on others than they do on the self (Davison, 1983). People have a basic assumption that persuasion is experienced differently by themselves and others (see also Chapter 3). This applies in many different media domains such as politics and the news, political speeches and advertising (e.g., Cavazza & Mucchi-Faina, 2008;

Douglas & Sutton, 2004; Duck, Terry & Hogg, 1995; Gibbon & Durkin, 1995; Gunther, 1995; Hoorens & Ruiter, 1996; Perloff, 1989; Reid, Byrne, Brundidge, Shoham & Marlow, 2007; Tal-Or, 2007). The TPE is said to reflect a self-serving bias; that is, people see themselves as less susceptible to persuasion than others because being 'gullible' is viewed as an undesirable trait. In a sense, people like comparing themselves downwards with people who are less fortunate or able than themselves. Supporting this account, the TPE tends to be stronger among individuals high in self-esteem (e.g., Perloff, 1989) and internal locus of control (e.g., Haridakis & Rubin, 2005). However, in addition to arising from these self-serving processes, the TPE may also result from people's intuitive psychological understandings of persuasive processes. These **intuitive theories** of persuasion have not been examined before despite their potential impact on persuasion judgements and behaviours. At a general level, it is in the nature of human beings to engage in psychological theorizing. People constantly wonder about psychological states and traits, and invoke these psychological constructs in explanations of their own and others' behaviour (Heider, 1958a; Malle, 2004). In doing so, they make use of culturally shared assumptions and intuitive theories about human psychology (Fletcher, 1995a, 1995b; Levy, Chiu & Hong, 2006; Wegener & Petty, 1998). It is reasonable to hypothesize that people do the same to understand how persuasion works.

In some of our own research we have addressed this issue, to try to gain more knowledge of how people understand persuasion. Specifically, if we want to know how people understand persuasion, we need to begin by focusing on what we, as social scientists, already know about persuasive processes. So, we focused on the elaboration likelihood model discussed earlier in this chapter. Based on research testing the principles of the ELM, we know that factors such as need for cognition (NFC) determine the extent to which people are influenced by different types of persuasive media (e.g., Cacioppo et al., 1996; Haddock et al., 2008). In particular, people who are high in NFC tend to be persuaded by central cues such as scientific evidence and strong arguments, whereas those who are low in NFC often appear to be more susceptible to peripheral cues – features of a message that do not typically provide logical or empirical grounds to accept the central argument of a message (Petty & Wegener, 1999). We investigated whether people's intuitive understanding of persuasion resembles the ELM in one key respect. Specifically, we investigated whether perceived NFC is negatively related to perceived susceptibility to persuasive advertisements that contain peripheral cues.

In the study (Douglas, Sutton & Stathi, 2010), we asked undergraduate participants how much each of several advertisements would affect themselves or other undergraduate students. These advertisements employed peripheral cues rather than direct arguments in favour of the advertised products. We used a between-groups design to determine whether the predicted TPE (lower perceived influence on the self than others) is influenced by perceived NFC. Specifically, we predicted that individuals would tend to rate themselves as higher than other undergraduates in NFC and that this difference would be able to account for the TPE. Results supported this hypothesis, demonstrating that people's intuitive understanding of persuasion resembles an established theoretical model of persuasion (the ELM) in a key respect. Specifically, perceived NFC is related to perceived resistance to persuasion by advertisements that rely on typically peripheral cues. This gives psychological and evaluative meaning to resistance and susceptibility to persuasion, helping explain why individuals are motivated to see themselves as less influenced than others. Of course, people may not necessarily be able to articulate their understanding of this link between NFC and persuasion. For example, it is unlikely that people would be able to invoke NFC as a construct in everyday life because it is probably not readily accessible, unlike features such as intelligence and critical thinking. This research provides evidence that people do indeed use their intuitive understanding of persuasion and the personal characteristics associated with persuasion to judge the extent to which persuasive attempts will be successful.

Questions

1. In this study, Douglas et al. (2010) only tested people's responses to glossy advertisements. What do you think might have happened if they had focused on advertisements containing strong arguments?
2. How do you think other models of persuasion (e.g., the HSM and unimodel) would account for these findings?
3. What might be some of the implications of these findings? For example, do you think that people could use their understanding of persuasion in their own attempts to achieve social influence?

Third-person effect (TPE) The tendency for people to assume that the media have a greater influence on others than on the self.

Intuitive theories Theories people have about human thought and behaviour that arrive from 'intuition'. These are also called 'lay theories' because they relate to how everyday people think about thought and behaviour.

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Subliminal messages

People are consciously aware of most messages that are designed to influence their attitudes and behaviours. However, using subliminal messages, advertisers sometimes attempt to influence people through an unconscious route. Subliminal ('below threshold'), unlike supraliminal ('above threshold'), stimuli are any type of sensory stimulation that occurs below an individual's absolute threshold for conscious perception. The idea of subliminal messages has caused some controversy over the years. For example, in 1985, two young men attempted suicide (one succeeded) and their families argued that it was because of the subliminal message 'do it' in the song 'Better by you, better than me' by British band Judas Priest. The families sought damages in the region of US$6 million and although the case was dropped, the judge ruled that the events would not have taken place if it were not for the 'power of suggestion'. A more recent example occurred in a US political TV advertisement run by the Republicans during the 2000 election, where the word 'RATS' was quickly flashed on screen during the advertisement. This was a subliminal message aimed to induce negative feelings about the Democratic Party and its policies. Subliminal messages such as these have been used in advertising for many years.

The results of some laboratory studies suggest that they work. For example, Krosnick, Betz, Jussim and Lynn (1992) showed participants pictures of people performing everyday tasks. Before looking at the pictures, the participants had been subliminally presented with pleasant (e.g., kittens) or unpleasant (e.g., dead bodies) images. Krosnick et al. found that when paired with pleasant subliminal images, participants rated the target people more favourably than those for whom the pictures were paired with unpleasant images (see also Dijksterhuis, Aarts & Smith, 2005; Karremans, Stroebe & Claus, 2006; Strahan, Spencer & Zanna, 2002). However, outside the laboratory, there is little evidence that subliminal messages work. Specifically, there is no evidence that subliminal messages will induce people to go out and buy things they do not want to buy, or do things they do not want to do (DeFleur & Petranoff, 1959; Pratkanis, Eskenazi & Greenwald, 1994; Trappey, 1996).

So, is all the fuss over nothing? Perhaps, but whether subliminal messages are effective, marginally effective or not effective at all, they still present an ethical issue. Using such messages, advertisers are exposing people to material they are not consciously aware of. People are therefore being deceived about the intent of the advertisement. For this reason, subliminal messages are illegal in the UK and Australia.

Questions

1. Can you think of other ethical question marks over the issue of subliminal messages?
2. What factors would make a subliminal message more or less effective?
3. Can you see good reasons to use subliminal messages?

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Take a look at the Student Project on page 661 by Molly Rasch from University College London. Molly examined ways to make people more active at work. She conducted interviews to study how people respond to being encouraged to stand (rather than sit) in meetings. Her research is relevant to the study of persuasion in this chapter and social influence in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have focused on the topic of persuasion. We have outlined some of the factors that determine when persuasion will be effective, discussed the key models that explain persuasion, outlined some of the techniques that people can use to be persuasive, and finally, discussed how people are able to resist persuasion. Specifically, you will now know that:

- Persuasion is the process by which a message changes a person's attitudes or behaviours.
- Persuasion is a function of three features: the source, message and target.
- If a message source is seen as attractive, it will be more persuasive. Another persuasive feature is the extent to which the source is seen as similar to the self. Findings show that people are also more persuaded by others whom they perceive to be trustworthy.
- In terms of the message, longer messages are not always best and there is a complex interplay between the length and strength of a message. The consistency between a persuasive message and the target's original attitude is also an important factor in determining the message's persuasive effectiveness. Messages can also be persuasive by making people feel fearful, bad, or that the item of interest is scarce. Sometimes, persuaders arm themselves with the objective facts in order to persuade others. Two-sided arguments can also be effective. Furthermore, information presented first (primacy effect) or last (recency effect) can be the most persuasive. Finally, it is important to consider the channel, or mode with which the information is presented.
- In terms of the target, the effectiveness of a persuasive message has been found to be influenced by gender, with women typically found to be more susceptible to persuasion than men, although findings are mixed. Age is also an important factor, with late adolescents and young adults being the most susceptible to persuasion. Many other social contextual variables and personality variables can influence persuasion, including a person's mood.
- Several models explain the processes involved in persuasion. The key models are dual process models, asserting that the source of the message and the message itself play distinct roles in persuasion, and that the outcome of a persuasive interaction also depends on the target or receiver's motivation and ability to process information.The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) asserts that variations in the nature of persuasion outcomes are dependent on the likelihood that recipients will engage in elaboration of (or thinking about) the arguments relevant to the issue. When people think carefully and pay special attention to the argument quality, they are attending to the central cues of the message and are being influenced via the central route to persuasion. On the other hand, when people attend to the more superficial characteristics of a message instead of the argument quality, they are attending to the peripheral cues of the message and are being influenced via the peripheral route to persuasion.
- The heuristic-systematic model (HSM) argues that systematic processing occurs when targets actively scan and process the arguments put forward in a message. When heuristic processing occurs, they resort to cognitive 'shortcuts' to process the message.
- Various factors influence the processing route to persuasion. First, the persuasive target's ability to focus influences whether superficial or deep processing will occur. The second key determinant is whether the persuasive target has the motivation to process. This can be influenced by a recipient's need for cognition (NFC) – an individual differences characteristic that reflects a person's tendency to engage in effortful thought.
- There are several well-known techniques that people can adopt to persuade others. First, persuaders can be more effective if they make themselves likeable to the target, or reciprocate something for them. The door-in-the-face technique entails the persuader making a large and unreasonable request that is followed by the smaller (intentional) request. The that's-not-all technique entices the target with extra

for their effort or money. The foot-in-the-door technique entails the persuader making a small request before moving in with the larger (intended) request. Finally, the lowball tactic involves the persuader changing the terms of the agreement during the interaction by introducing hidden costs.

» Sometimes, persuasion does not work. When the persuader really puts pressure on, the target can become irritated, resentful and can react against the persuasion attempt. Furthermore, if people are warned about a persuasive attempt, they are less likely to succumb to it. People can also actively resist persuasion by addressing and arguing against attitude-incongruent arguments directly. The process of attitude inoculation demonstrates that weaker arguments inoculate people against later, stronger influence attempts. Avoidance is another resistance tactic, where the target simply ignores or filters out information that is inconsistent with their pre-existing attitudes.

This chapter has covered persuasion. In Chapter 7, we turn our attention to close relationships.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. What elements of persuasion does a person need to consider when they are trying to sell something (e.g., selling a used iPad on eBay)? Discuss the elements of the source, message and target that might end with a successful sale.
2. How can a person get another person to comply with a significant request? Discuss some of the persuasive tactics that people can use to get what they want.
3. What are some of the factors that enable people to resist persuasive attempts?

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Persuading people to change their ways in order to avert or minimize climate change

Over 98 per cent of publishing climate scientists agree that human beings are causing the world to get warmer. To avert the negative consequences of increased warming in the future, behaviour change is required. However, a large minority of the public in many countries, particularly Western countries, is largely unconvinced that there is a problem.

1. Use an Internet search engine or an academic database to find out what proportion of the public of your country, and around the world, are doubtful that human beings are affecting the world's climate. What are some of the reasons why people are doubtful of the scientific evidence? (Hint: think about our discussion about the influence of misinformation.)
2. Find an article that evaluates the use of fear campaigns to persuade people of the climate change hypothesis and the need for action. Are they effective?
3. What alternatives to fear campaigns have been used? Which appear to be among the most promising or successful?
4. A common intuition among environmentalists is that people resist environmental messages because of *defensiveness* related to their self-esteem. They feel bad or guilty about the possibility that they are part of the problem, and so refuse to believe the messages they are getting from climate sciences, governments and charities. Can you find any experimental evidence suggesting that this intuition may be right? (Hint: 2010 is a good year to look in.)

5. Find two examples of climate change advertising campaigns (be it TV, newspaper or radio advertising, the Internet, social networks or posters). Compare, contrast and evaluate them in light of what you have learned in this chapter. How could they be improved?
6. In light of what you learned about the relationship between attitudes and behaviour in Chapter 4, do you think it is more productive to attempt to persuade people that the world is warming because of us, or to give up on getting them to 'believe in' climate change, and focus instead on persuading them to alter their behaviour? Why?

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources including videos and self-test multiple choice questions to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

Brock, T.C., & Green, M.C. (Eds.). (2005). *Persuasion: Psychological insights and perspectives* (2nd ed). London: Sage. Broad coverage of the area from experts in the field.

Eagly, A.H., & Chaiken, S. (1993). *The psychology of attitudes*. Forth Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Written by two of the most distinguished researchers in the field, provides comprehensive coverage of classic research.

Knowles, E.S., & Linn, J.A. (Eds.). (2004). *Resistance and persuasion*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. Collection of chapters from leaders in the research field. Interesting look at resistance to persuasion, with a focus on how resistance can be reduced, overcome or used to promote persuasion.

Maio, G., & Haddock, G. (2009). *The psychology of attitudes and attitude change*. London: Sage. Comprehensive review of the literature on attitudes and attitude change, focusing on both basic and applied research.

Petty, R., & Wegener, D.T. (1998). Attitude change: Multiple roles for persuasion variables. In D.T. Gilbert, S.T. Fiske & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (4th ed, vol. 1, pp. 323–90). Boston: McGraw-Hill. Useful chapter providing a comparison of the ELM and HSM models of persuasion.

Vogel, T., & Wanke, M. (2016). *Attitudes and attitude change*. Abingdon: Routledge. Comprehensive and accessible introduction to the basic issues in the psychological study of attitudes, with a focus on both North American and European research.

CHAPTER

7 CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

In this chapter, we review the social psychological literature on close relationships, focusing primarily on romantic relationships, but also friendships. We outline the factors that determine when people are attracted to each other. We then review some of the key social psychological theories of attraction. Our focus then turns to love and romantic relationships more specifically and how romantic relationships are maintained. Finally, we focus on the often painful process of relationship breakdown.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Interpersonal attraction
- Theories of attraction
- Love and romantic relationships
- Attachment and bonding
- Maintaining relationships
- When relationships end

Getty Images/Squaredpixels

Close relationships are at the very centre of human existence. Families love, support and bring joy to each other throughout life. Romantic partners enable people to feel nurtured, needed, important and special. Close friendships provide people with support and acceptance, shared interests and shared experiences. Having close relationships makes people feel good, and as human beings we have a fundamental need to affiliate and bond with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Reis & Collins, 2004; Reis, Collins & Berscheid, 2000). Of course, we do not bond with everyone we meet. You may only need to think momentarily about your school days to remember how intensely you liked some of your classmates and the dislike you felt for others. Most of the time, the feelings were mutual. Interpersonal attraction is a powerful thing. Close relationships are also one of the most common themes in music, movies, television and novels. Turn on the radio and it is likely that within a few minutes you will hear someone singing about love and relationships, uttering words like 'I need you' or 'you've got a friend'. Humans seem to be preoccupied with the idea of being 'in love' or in other kinds of close relationships.

This preoccupation makes sense. The loss or lack of close relationships can lead to negative outcomes such as depression, loneliness and alienation (Buckley, Winkel & Leary, 2004). People who are socially isolated are at greater risk of early mortality (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, Baker, Harris & Stephenson, 2015). People feel ostracized and sometimes become angry and aggressive when they are rejected by close others (Wesselmann, Ren & Williams, 2017; Williams, Cheung & Choi, 2000). People feel deep sadness when relationships come to an end (Simpson, 1987). Close relationships are therefore necessary for survival and happiness and humans strive to seek and maintain these close social bonds with others. For example, we spend a lot of time and energy making ourselves attractive to prospective mates. We spend money on clothes, makeup and exercise equipment to maximize our physical appeal. We join groups to find others with whom we share interests. We do things that our friends also like to do. In short, we need to belong with others and will go to great lengths to make close relationships a core feature of life. Indeed, evolutionary psychologists have long argued that attraction, relationships and love are core to human survival and, as we will see in this chapter, basic principles of attraction have evolved to ensure the survival of the fittest (e.g., Barrett, Dunbar & Lycett, 2002; Buss, 1995, 2000, 2009).

In Part 3 of this book, we focus on the many benefits that humans gain from being around other humans in groups, but in this chapter we focus on the formation and development of close relationships between individuals. Specifically, we discuss why and when people are drawn to each other in the first place, what this magical thing is that we call 'love', theories of close relationships, how we maintain relationships and how we end them. Much of the research in this chapter relates to the development, maintenance and ending of *romantic* relationships, but we also discuss literature related to other close relationships such as friendships. As you will see, the factors that influence attraction and many other relationship factors are essentially the same for romantic relationships and close friendships.

INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION

We all know from personal experience that we tend to like some people, but not others. Indeed, it is possible to take an immediate like or dislike to someone when we first meet them. Sometimes, we can articulate why we feel this reaction and at other times we are only aware of a 'gut' response to another person that influences whether or not we think they are likeable or attractive, and worth getting to know better. Social psychologists have identified

several key factors that influence who we like, or are attracted to, and who we do not like, or are not attracted to. Some are physical factors such as appearance and proximity. Others are psychological factors such as attitude similarity and mutual liking.

Physical determinants of attraction

Many of the reasons why we are drawn to others are simple and they are often features of our daily lives we cannot control. For example, we may like people simply because they are close by (e.g., Festinger, Schachter & Back, 1950). People who we see a lot are familiar and so we like them more than people who we see less often, which can influence our friendships and romantic relationships. Also, we tend to like people who are similar to ourselves on basic features such as looks, and this is particularly important with respect to romantic relationships (e.g., Murstein, 1986; Sprecher, 1998). Such factors can be defined as the physical determinants of attraction – features of our environment or appearance that influence our liking for others. The key physical determinant of attraction is a person's physical appearance, which we discuss first.

Physical appearance

Probably the most important factor in determining judgements of attractiveness is a person's physical appearance. Like it or not, we judge others (and are likewise judged by them) based on looks. This fundamental effect was demonstrated in a study by Walster, Aronson, Abrahams and Rottman (1966), who asked undergraduate students to complete a range of personality and aptitude tests before matching them up randomly at a social dance. The experimenters also rated the physical attractiveness of each participant. The couples spent time together during the evening before evaluating their partner and the success of the date. Results showed that personality and aptitude factors were poor predictors of participants' ratings. For example, participants did not show preferences for partners with high self-esteem or low anxiety, as one might expect. Instead, only the physical attractiveness of the partner seemed to matter. In other words, the more attractive the partner, the more likely it was the participant liked them and wanted to go out on another date.

If a person is physically attractive, this is an asset in other facets of life (Langlois et al., 2000). For example, an attractive person is more likely to go out on dates (e.g., Berscheid, Dion, Walster & Walster, 1971; Rowatt, Cunningham & Druen, 1999), get better marks at university (Landy & Sigall, 1974), be successful in a job interview (Dipboye, Arvey & Terpstra, 1977; Huang & Lin, 2016; Mack & Rainey, 1990; Marvelle & Green, 1980) and earn more money once they have a job (French, 2002; Frieze, Olson & Russell, 1991; Mobius & Rosenblat, 2006; Scholz & Sicinski, 2015; Umberson & Hughes, 1987). Attractive people are more likely to win elections (Milazzo & Mattes, 2015; Poutvaara, Jordahl & Berggren, 2009), and especially when voters are uninformed (Stockemer & Praino, 2015), attractive university teachers get higher evaluations (Hamermesh & Parker, 2005; Mendez & Mendez, 2016), attractive male footballers earn more money (Rosar, Hagenah & Klein, 2017), while attractive people are treated more leniently in the legal system (Downs & Lyons, 1991; Mackelprang & Becker, 2015). An attractive person is also perceived by participants in studies as more likely to get married (Dion, Berscheid & Walster, 1972), to be more honest (Yarmouk, 2000), to be more trustworthy (Ma, Xu & Luo, 2015), and to be happier (Dion et al., 1972). Research has further shown that small babies prefer to look at attractive faces than less attractive faces (Langlois et al., 1987, 2000). Furthermore, children tend to prefer attractive children (Dion, 1973; Dion & Berscheid, 1974; Langlois et al., 2000) and adults tend to think that attractive children are more intelligent and more successful (Clifford & Walster, 1973). Clearly, it is good to be good-looking.

These findings show that people often attach positive qualities to attractive people. This is sometimes called the **physical attractiveness stereotype** – the tendency for people to assume that attractive people possess other socially desirable traits in addition to their looks (Dion et al., 1972; Moore, Graziano & Millar, 1987). To some extent, this is true. Some research shows that physically attractive people *are* more popular and outgoing (Langlois et al., 2000). However, these small differences may be due, in part, to self-fulfilling prophecies. That is, because being physically attractive is socially desirable, attractive people may become more confident and outgoing and so may be more popular with others. Also, it is important to note that physical attractiveness has its drawbacks. In particular, more attractive people are often the subject of unwanted advances and resentment from less attractive individuals (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). Attractive celebrities are often the victims of stalking (Roberts, 2007). Also, attractive, popular adolescents are more likely to engage in aggressive, destructive and norm-breaking behaviours (Dijkstra, Lindenberg, Verhulst, Ormel & Veenstra, 2009). Finally, attractive children in need receive less empathy and help than children who are not as attractive (Fisher & Ma, 2014). Thus, being attractive is not always as favourable as it may seem. Nevertheless, attractiveness is a key variable in the study of relationships. What specific features make a person attractive to others?

Physical attractiveness stereotype The tendency for people to assume that physically attractive people possess other socially desirable traits such as warmth and intelligence.

What is attractive?

Naturally, there is wide variation in what specific features people view to be appealing. For example, some people think that tattoos and piercings are attractive but others do not. Some women adopt the 'thin ideal', whereas others would prefer to be more curvy. Some men wear facial hair and others prefer to be clean shaven. There are, of course, other reasons to adopt these aspects of one's appearance. For example, beards may be worn for religious purposes, a woman may need to be thin to be a model, and a person may need to have tattoos in order to be part of a gang. However, a lot of the time, people show preferences for physical features in themselves that they find attractive. The list of differences in personal preferences is endless (Perrett, 2010). Likewise, there is a lot of variation in people's preference to see these types of features (e.g., tattoos, beards) in others. However, despite these many differences, there is strong consensus both within and between cultures about attractiveness (Langlois et al., 2000). Specifically, when rating faces, people across the world seem to agree quite closely on who is attractive and who is not. For example, Langlois and Roggman (1990) asked participants to rate the physical attractiveness of a range of faces from different nationalities and ethnic groups. Participants' ratings agreed to a significant extent, with correlations between them reaching up to .93. Perhaps surprisingly, there seem to be universal standards of attractiveness.

Is there some kind of 'super person' who everyone finds attractive? The answer is no. Interestingly, the most attractive face tends to be the most 'average' face (Rhodes, 1996; Rhodes, Halberstadt, Jeffery & Palermo, 2005). For example, Winkielman, Halberstadt, Fazendeiro and Catty (2006) asked participants to view a series of faces. Some faces were normal (e.g., how the person actually looks) and others were digitized or combined multiple faces to produce 'mathematically average' or prototypical faces. Findings showed that, on average, people perceived the artificial prototypical faces to be more attractive than the actual faces. Winkielman et al. argued that this **averageness effect**, or preference for prototypical faces, occurs because average faces are closer to the mental prototype of a face. In other words, they are more 'face-like' and therefore more familiar. The authors further argued that this familiarity leads to higher ratings of attractiveness because the prototypical faces are easier to process. As people are exposed to more and more faces, a typical face prototype is developed and new faces are compared to this prototype. The closer a novel face is to the prototype, the more quickly it is processed and the

Averageness effect The finding that people prefer average or prototypical faces to faces that have distinctive features.

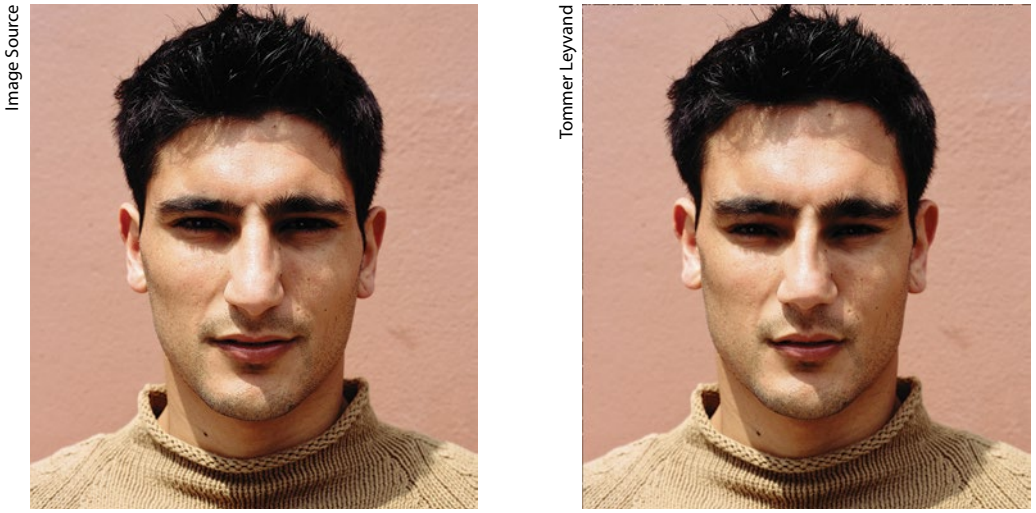

FIGURE 7.1 Original and manipulated photos The original photograph is on the left-hand side and the manipulated photo is on the right. In these types of studies, most people tend to agree that the manipulated photo is more attractive.

Perceptual fluency The relative ease of mental operations.

more it is liked (see Figure 7.1). This is a case where **perceptual fluency** – the relative ease of mental operations – is high (Jacoby, 1983; Mandler, 1980; Schwarz, 1998). However, it can also be related to the mere exposure effect, which we discuss later in this chapter, where repeated exposure to a stimulus makes people like it more. In this case, the repeated exposure leads the person to create a prototype of 'face-like-ness', which is then used as a benchmark from which to judge the attractiveness of other faces.

Other studies have produced similar results. For example, Johnston (2000) created an average female face by combining 16 female Caucasian faces. He then subtly exaggerated the femininity of the faces by enhancing the features in which women and men typically differ (e.g., bigger eyes, fuller lips). Most people tend to find the composite female face to be more attractive and familiar (see also Langlois & Roggman, 1990; Monin, 2003; Rhodes & Tremewan, 1996; Rhodes et al., 2001). Evolutionary theorists argue that this preference for prototypicality in faces has evolved because prototypicality is a signal for health and therefore for reproductive fitness (e.g., Symons, 1979; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1993). More recent research has also shown that average faces are perceived as more attractive in another way – people like and trust them more than regular faces (Sofer, Dotsch, Wigboldus & Todorov, 2015).

It is also the case that averageness is not always best. Perrett, May and Yoshikawa (1994) made composite faces from groups of faces that had previously been rated as 'average' and another set of composite faces that had previously been rated as 'highly attractive'. A composite of the 'average' faces was constructed for both Japanese and Caucasian faces and the same was done for the 'highly attractive' faces, resulting in an average composite of each type of face and for each race. These were then shown to a group of participants who were asked to rate the attractiveness of the faces. Results revealed that the 'highly attractive' composites were rated as more attractive than the 'average' composites, as one might expect. Further, Japanese and British participants showed similar ratings to each other, for both race composites, suggesting again that there are universal aspects of attractiveness.

Another factor to consider is that composite or average faces tend to be more *symmetrical* and people tend to find symmetrical faces more attractive than asymmetrical faces (Halberstadt & Rhodes, 2000; Penton-Voak & Perrett, 2001; Rhodes, 1996, 2006; Rhodes, Sumich & Byatt, 1999, and in particular for men (Foo, Simmons & Rhodes, 2017). People also rate symmetrical faces as healthier, more dominant and more extroverted (Foo et al., 2017; Shackelford & Larsen, 1997). Within sets of identical twins, the twin with the most symmetrical face is rated the most attractive (Mealey, Bridgstock & Townsend, 1999).

Why is facial symmetry important? Some social psychologists have proposed that this preference for average and symmetrical faces has evolved; that is, throughout the course of our evolution, people have come to prefer certain dimensions in faces (Langlois et al., 2000; Langlois, Roggman & Musselman, 1994). It is argued that this preference comes about because a prototypical face is a good indicator of the biological quality of a potential partner. For example, people who have more average faces tend to have a more diverse gene pool. Such diversity means they are likely to be stronger and more able to fight off diseases. Thus, they are more reproductively fit and, essentially, a better choice of mate (Grammer & Thornhill, 1994). Participants in experiments therefore may tend to prefer composite faces because they do not have some of the atypical features that make faces asymmetrical.

If a preference for prototypicality has evolved, then perhaps the averageness effect should only be seen for human faces. Interestingly, however, the averageness effect also extends to people's judgements of the attractiveness of dogs, watches, birds, cars and other non-human objects (e.g., Halberstadt & Rhodes, 2000, 2003). The averageness effect does not appear to extend beyond human perceivers though. In a recent study, monkeys were shown average or non-averge faces of other monkeys and they did not show any preference for the average faces. If anything, they tended to look for longer at the non-average faces (Tomeo, Ungerleider & Liu, 2017). Evidence that the averageness effect extends to non-human animals would provide stronger evidence for evolutionary origins. Others argue that, in evolutionary terms, physical attractiveness signals that a person is young, healthy and fertile and this is why attractiveness is valued (e.g., Jokela, 2009; Swami, Furnham & Joshi, 2008). Evolutionary social psychologists also argue that there are biological reasons why heterosexual women tend to find high status men attractive and heterosexual men focus more on a woman's youth and beauty. For example, Buss (1989, 2003; see also Mathes & Kozak, 2008) argued that the characteristics preferred by men in women signal reproductive fitness and the characteristics sought by women in men signal stability and the ability to provide for offspring. In support of this view, Wang et al. (2018) found that higher economic status – as measured by annual salary – was a much stronger predictor of perceived attractiveness for men than women.

Evolutionary psychologists have also explained why men almost universally prefer women whose waists are in a 30:70 proportion to their hips – this shape is associated with fertility, and events that affect fertility, such as pregnancy and malnutrition, also cause changes in shape (Koscinski, 2014; Singh, 1993; Singh & Young, 1995; but see also Swami, Gray & Furnham, 2007). Interestingly, women show similar effects, preferring more masculine features at the time they ovulate or during their fertile years of life than at other times (Gangestad, Simpson, Cousins, Garver-Apgar & Christensen, 2004; Jones et al., 2008; Little et al., 2010; Macrae, Alnwick, Milne & Schloerscheidt, 2002; see Buss & Schmitt, 2019 for an overview). Incredibly, women prefer the smell of T-shirts worn by physically symmetrical men, a finding more pronounced at the time of ovulation (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). Another striking finding is that strippers earn more tips when they are at the most fertile time in their menstrual cycle (Miller, Tybur & Jordon, 2007). However, this was only the case for women who were not taking the contraceptive pill; those who were on the pill (and therefore not ovulating, and presumably less interested in mating) did not show an increase in earnings via tips. Furthermore, women are rated by men and also rate themselves as more attractive at the peak of their menstrual cycle (Roder, Brewer & Fink, 2009; Schwarz & Hassebrauck, 2008), while studies have also shown that women wear more provocative clothing at the time they are most fertile (e.g., Durante, Li & Haselton, 2008; Eisenbruch, Simmons & Roney, 2015; Roder et al., 2009). All this is quite fascinating, but what does it mean? According to evolutionary psychologists, these findings mean that men prefer women who appear most fertile, and when women are at their most fertile, they prefer the 'fittest' men to mate with. Mating, like other fundamental needs, is driven somewhat by biological factors. Even considering some cultural variations – such as in foraging societies, where thinness is undesirable because it signifies malnutrition and fatness signifies wealth (e.g., Marlowe & Wetsman, 2001) – attractiveness seems to be a sign of reproductive fitness. The Critical Focus box below presents an evolutionary perspective on heterosexual mate selection and relationships.

EXPLORING FURTHER

It is clear that the 'ideal female shape' has not always been the same. For example, compare the more voluptuous Marilyn Monroe from the 1950s (a) with a super-slim catwalk model of today (b). What does this tell us about the factors that influence what we find attractive? Is it all down to evolution? Do you think that standards would differ for men and women? Find out more about the evolutionary perspective on attractiveness and consider what other features influence our view of what is attractive. Try to construct arguments for and against the evolutionary perspective on attractiveness, drawing on other examples such as changes in 'tanning' over the years.

(a) Marilyn Monroe

Bettmann/Corbis

(b) Today's super-slim catwalk model

Mee Ting/Fotolia.com

CRITICAL FOCUS

Sexual strategies theory

Evolutionary psychologists construe human attraction (and specifically their sexual preferences) as being part of a sexual strategy, designed by evolution to maximize people's chances of transmitting their genes. According to this perspective, this is why heterosexual men and women show different preferences when choosing a long-term mate. *Sexual strategies theory* (Buss & Schmitt, 1993, 2016, 2019) purportedly explains why men show a preference for youth, physical health and attractiveness (cues to fertility and reproductive value) and why women show a preference for status, maturity and resources (cues related to the potential ability to provide for mother and child). It also attempts to explain why men tend to engage in short-term mating more than women. After all, men are able to 'pass on' more of their genes by mating with multiple females. If a man mates with many women, there is a good chance he will father more children. The same behaviour in women provides no evolutionary advantage. She can mate with many men but can only produce one child at a time. However, Buss and Schmitt argue that women can benefit from short-term mating if it gives them access to an exceptionally good man. An exceptionally good man may produce an exceptionally good child with good genes, thus suiting an evolutionary purpose for the woman. Successfully copying your genes is much more a matter of quality for women, since the quantity of offspring that women can have is limited.

According to sexual strategies theory, whether long- or short-term strategies are chosen depends on factors such as opportunity, personal 'market value', sex ratio available in the 'pool' and other cultural and social features. However, when short-term mating is opted for, it is predicted that:

1. Men will desire more sexual variety (more partners).
2. Men require less time to elapse before consenting to sex than women.
3. Men tend to actively seek more mates than women.

To test this theory, Schmitt et al. (2003) measured the desire for sexual variety of 16,000 participants in 52 countries. The measures looked like this:

Ideally, how many different sex partners would you like to have …

In the next month
In the next six months
....
Your remaining lifetime

Schmitt et al. also measured the time required before an individual is willing to engage in sexual intercourse as follows:

If the conditions were right, would you consider sexual intercourse desirable if you had known that person for …

1 hour (definitely yes +3 + 2 +1 0 -1 -2 -3 definitely no)
5 years (definitely yes +3 + 2 +1 0 -1 -2 -3 definitely no)

Finally, the researchers measured the degree to which the individual is actively seeking short-term mating partners:

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly

The results were *winsorized*, which means that extreme outliers were removed. For example, anyone who said that they wanted more than 100 sexual partners was removed so as not to skew the results (for interest's sake, these were men).

The results concerning the 'number of partners' measure supported the first hypothesis, that across all regions of the world, men desired more partners. To test the second hypothesis, Schmitt et al. (2003) compared results for men and women's required time before consenting to sex. Again, there was a significant sex difference in all regions. By and large, men were happy to have intercourse with someone within a month of knowing them; women wanted to take longer. Finally, to test the third hypothesis, Schmitt et al. compared women and men on the 'actively seeking short-term mates' measure. Yet again, men were more likely to report actively searching for short-term mates, even when they were already in a relationship.

Schmitt et al. argued that their results provide evidence for the evolutionary basis of mate selection. Across cultures, heterosexual men and women show different mating preferences, suggesting a deep-rooted biological basis for mate selection. The evidence seems compelling. However, like any piece of research, it is necessary to critically evaluate the claims made from the study:

1. The methods rely on self-report data, that is, people report their sexual preferences in a questionnaire. Arguably, this is not, therefore, an objective measure of actual sexual preferences. In particular, it may be socially desirable for men to appear 'macho' by reporting that they have (and desire) many mates. So, do participants' responses adequately represent reality? In defence of sexual strategies theory, Schmitt et al. (2003) argue that their results mirror those of other studies, which have used observational data. For example, the prevalence of adultery and use of pornography is higher in men than women.
2. The many student participants may not be representative of people in general because there may be a student subculture across countries and cultures.
3. One key criticism of the evolutionary approach to human mating is that even if we accept that sex differences are real, is the evolutionary approach the only, or even the best explanation? Is it really scientifically viable?

Eagly and Wood (1999; see also Eagly, Wood & Johanssen-Schmidt, 2004; Zentner & Eagly, 2015) offer the most thorough, concentrated criticism and constructive alternative. First, it is important to note that they accept biological differences. For example, men are bigger than women, as well as more physically powerful. Women are more invested in children. Because of the differences observed by Schmitt et al., men are more likely to have the role of hunter-gatherer and women are more likely to have the role of carer. The crucial difference between Eagly and Wood's approach and the evolutionary approach is that mate selection is determined by social roles and not inherent biological differences. There is no necessary or strong genetic influence on sexual preferences, which are socially determined. Both theories acknowledge social and genetic factors, but to a different extent. Debate about these issues is ongoing. One key issue is how to distinguish which theory is best to explain sexual preferences.

Questions

1. Can you think of other issues concerning the self-report method?
2. How do you think Schmitt et al. would argue against the criticism that student participants are an inappropriate sample?
3. Can you think of ways to distinguish between Schmitt et al. and Eagly and Wood's theories? What type of study might enable social psychologists to find out which is a better explanation for sexual preferences?

With almost universal agreement about standards of attractiveness, readers may come to the conclusion that everyone seeks the same type of partner. While it may be the case that everyone wishes to have a great-looking partner, it is clear that this is not possible. In romantic relationships, what other factors determine who is attracted to whom?

The matching phenomenon

Matching phenomenon
The tendency for individuals to choose as partners people who are a similar match to themselves in terms of their physical attractiveness.

One key mechanism that determines who people are attracted to is what social psychologists call the **matching phenomenon**. This is where people tend to be attracted to people who are about the same level of physical attractiveness as themselves. For example, many studies have found a strong association between the attractiveness of married and dating couples (Murstein, 1986; Sprecher, 1998). Further, other studies show that in dating-type scenarios, people tend to approach people whose attractiveness is fairly close to their own (Berscheid et al., 1971; Price & Vandenberg, 1979; Stroebe, Insko, Thompson & Layton, 1971; Taylor, Fiore, Mendelsohn & Cheshire, 2011). Also, people who are a close physical match tend to have more long-lasting relationships than those who are less closely matched (White, 1980; see Swami, 2015 for an overview).

Does this mean that people never date people who are 'out of their league'? Clearly not. This fantasy of dating people who are more attractive is another preoccupation that humans seem to have. It is a common theme in teenage movies and TV programmes to 'catch' the hottest boy or girl in school. Also, many songs and poems speak of coveted others who are out of reach, mainly because they are too beautiful or too handsome. Even though the matching phenomenon is powerful, this does not mean that people never have successful relationships with more or less physically attractive others.

TIME TO REFLECT

Research suggests that people tend to be attracted to others who are their match with respect to physical attractiveness. Does this mean that people stop wanting 'more'? What do you think the processes might be that lead people to end up with their own physical matches? Is partner selection like the marketplace? We want something we simply cannot afford, so settle for something else instead?

In such cases, social psychologists argue that for less physically attractive people, *compensatory factors* often mean that they can make up for their looks and make themselves attractive in other areas. For example, they may be wealthy, intelligent and witty, or belong to an attractive social circle. These features are attractive. Such compensatory factors increase a person's appeal to others who may be more physically attractive but value these other attributes more than looks. In this respect, although it sounds strange, seeking a relationship can be compared to the process of going shopping. When we go shopping, we sometimes value an item's specifications over its aesthetic appeal. We weigh up what we value most and make a decision based on that process. For example, we might think that a phone is clunky and dull, but really value its high specification camera. We do the same in relationships and the value of the respective 'assets' generates an equal match. You will see this phenomenon in action on dating websites and personal advertisements. People offer their attributes and hope to meet others who share some similarities and complement them in other ways (Cicerello & Sheehan, 1995; Koestner & Wheeler, 1988). Or, they may seek people who value the traits they themselves possess. Interestingly, Morgan, Richards and VanNess (2010) explored the online personal advertisements of 294 heterosexual and homosexual women and men by comparing the narratives that participants generated about themselves and their preferred partner. The self and partner narratives were remarkably similar and even though there were some differences (e.g., homosexual individuals were more likely to list physical attributes than heterosexual advertisers), the study provides strong support for the matching phenomenon in dating websites rather than seeking complementary characteristics.

However, research shows that there are some gender differences in what men and women offer and seek. Studies have shown that while women tend to offer looks and seek wealth and status (e.g., 'Attractive 28-year-old woman seeks professional man'), men tend to offer wealth and status while seeking looks (e.g., 'Professional 40-year-old man seeks attractive young woman') (Baise & Schroeder, 1995). This is sometimes called **asset matching** and allows people to exchange what they want from relationships. From an evolutionary perspective, this also makes some sense. Women may seek high status in men so that they can provide for their offspring. On the other hand, men may seek the most sexually attractive female mate to increase their reproductive success (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). There is some evidence that this personal advertising strategy might work. For example, Strassberg and English (2015) found that personal advertisements where women were described as attractive and men as financially successful solicited the most interest.

Asset matching Seeking complementary 'assets' allows people to exchange what they want from relationships.

Matching with similar others is not just about physical attractiveness either. As we will see later, people tend to seek relationships with others who are also similar in terms of attitudes, values and preferences. Thankfully, it is not all about looks, despite the powerful influence of physical attractiveness.

Familiarity and proximity

In addition to good looks, simply finding someone familiar or being in close **proximity** to others can facilitate attraction. Familiarity may even influence people's ratings of *physical* attractiveness. For example, Little and Perrett (2002) found that when participants rated the attractiveness of faces, they preferred the faces that were most similar to their own. In fact, among a series of photos of the opposite sex, participants rated a morphed, opposite-gender version of their own face as the most attractive. Thus, it seems that we like what we see as physically similar to us. Further, Little, Burt and Perrett (2006) demonstrated that if a person was said to possess a certain (desirable) personality characteristic that is familiar and important to the perceiver, the perceiver rated the face as more attractive.

Proximity/ propinquity effect Being or living close to others can facilitate attraction and relationship formation.

Familiarity influences attraction in other ways. For example, in terms of friendships, we are often friendliest with the neighbours who live closest to us. At school, we may have bonded with the child sitting next to us in class (see Figure 7.2). Being close to others makes it more likely that we

Tom Dick & Debbie Productions/Macmillan Publishers

FIGURE 7.2 Familiarity increases the likelihood of attraction These two children who sit next to each other in class are more likely to form a friendship with one another. This is called the proximity/propinquity effect.

will form friendships or romantic relationships with them (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). This effect of proximity (sometimes also called the **propinquity effect**) was demonstrated in a classic study by Festinger et al. (1950), who found that, in a housing complex for married couples at a large US university, when people were asked to name their friends, they tended to name people in the same building even though the other buildings were only metres away. Also, within a building, people tended to choose friends who were living on the same floor as themselves, as opposed to those who were on other floors or in other buildings. Furthermore, the location of key building features such as staircases and mailboxes also had an impact on friendships. In particular, people situated on different floors but directly next to a staircase were more likely to become friends than those situated on different floors and further away from the staircase. Likewise, the people closest to the staircases and mailboxes on the lower floor were more likely to have friends upstairs than those who were further away from the building's key features. These important features made people even more proximal; people close to the stairs and mailboxes were even more likely to come into contact with each other. As a result, they were also more likely to become friends. A similar effect was also demonstrated in a study by Back, Schmukle and Egloff (2008), who randomly assigned students to sit next to someone, or in the same row as that person, for one whole term during a psychology class. A year later, the researchers measured the students' liking for the person. Results revealed that the closer they sat to the person, the more they liked them. This propinquity effect even seems to occur when people judge the attractiveness of pictures. Shin, Suh, Li, Eo, Chong and Tsai (2018) gave male participants pictures of female targets who either appeared closer or further away. The participants consistently preferred the targets who appeared closer to them.

Perhaps these findings seem quite logical. After all, it is easier to get to know someone who is nearby and with whom you anticipate interacting in future. But why exactly does proximity make us like people more? Social psychologists argue that proximity is effective because we tend to like things (in this case, people) that are familiar to us. Furthermore, repeated exposure to another person – particularly if the exposure is positive – is likely to lead to more favourable evaluations of that person. Even tiny babies tend to smile more at photos they have already seen before than those that are unfamiliar (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1981). This is an example of the mere exposure effect. Zajonc (1968, 2001) argued that when we first encounter a stimulus, which can be anything from nonsense words to people's faces, we feel slightly uncomfortable. It is reasonable that we react this way because new and unfamiliar objects (and people) might cause us danger. Again, this makes evolutionary sense. To ensure survival, it is important to avoid things that may be dangerous.

However, as people are repeatedly exposed to a stimulus, it becomes more familiar. Furthermore, if the stimulus has caused no harm, then feelings of uncertainty will dissipate and liking will increase. For example, Zajonc (1968, 1980) found that people were more likely to say that familiar nonsense words (ones they had been exposed to earlier in the experiment) meant something positive. Harmon-Jones and Allen (2001) found that people smiled more when they saw familiar faces rather than unfamiliar faces. In the Festinger et al. (1950) study, people were more likely to see people who were either close (on the same floor) or *functionally close* (near mailboxes and stairs) in the building. Thus, they became more familiar over time and from this familiarity, liking increased and friendships and relationships grew.

TIME TO REFLECT

If you have ever lived in student accommodation, who did you consider to be your closest friends? Are there any patterns (e.g., proximity, familiarity and so on) similar to those observed in social psychological research?

The effect of repeated exposure on liking was also demonstrated in a study by Moreland and Beach (1992), set in the context of a US college course. In the study, one experimental assistant, posing as a student, attended the course 15 times, one attended 10 times, one attended 5 times and one did not attend at all. None of the assistants ever interacted with the students. At the end of the course, students in all the classes were shown photographs of all four individuals and were asked to indicate how much they liked each one. As can be seen in Figure 7.3, the more times an assistant attended the class, the more the students were attracted to them. Strikingly, without even interacting with a person, simply seeing them more often makes them more attractive to us.

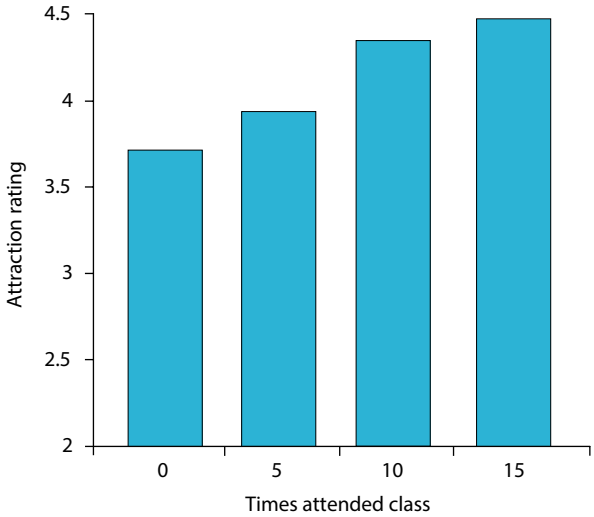

FIGURE 7.3 Repeated exposure effect The more times an assistant attended a class, the more they were liked by the course students.

Source: Data from Moreland and Beach (1992)

Familiarity works on other interesting levels too. For example, we often associate names with positive experiences and other names with negative experiences. We may have met a Bob we really liked, or an Adam we did not like at all. A kind of stereotype emerges if we associate a particular name with positive attributes and this stereotype influences our future judgements about others who share the name (Macrae, Mitchell & Pendry, 2002). Sometimes, stereotypes about a name become shared, so that many people will associate a certain name with particular traits (Mehrabian & Piercy, 1993). Perhaps this is one good reason why most parents do not call their newborn baby boy Adolf or Osama, but, at least in some parts of the world, Jesus is a relatively popular name. More generally, children's names tend to follow trends. For example, in 2017 the top three names for English newborn girls were Olivia, Amelia and Isla, and for boys, Oliver, Harry and George (ONS, 2018). Contrast these names to those that were most popular in 1904 for girls (Mary, Florence, Doris), and for boys (William, John, George). One reason for such trends is that familiar names from the media, sport and other areas are liked more and so more parents choose these names for their own children.

Proximity to others also increases the anticipation that we will interact with them in future. With this anticipation of future interaction, liking also increases (Berscheid, Graziano, Monson & Dermer, 1976; Darley & Berscheid, 1967). For example, Darley and Berscheid (1967) gave female students some vague information about two other women, one of whom the participant was supposed to interact with immediately afterwards. When asked to rate how much they liked each woman, participants rated the woman they were supposed to interact with as more likeable. It is argued that this phenomenon helps people form positive relationships. If anticipating interaction with another person increases liking for them, then this *anticipatory liking* will increase the chance of the relationship's success (Klein & Kunda, 1992; Knight & Vallacher, 1981). This makes adaptive sense for us too. An old saying goes that 'you can choose your friends but not your family' – thankfully, the effect of anticipatory liking means that we are adapted to like those with whom we have regular contact. Thus, while we cannot necessarily choose our family, we are more or less 'programmed' to like them because we expect to see and interact with them often.

The effect of mere exposure can even occur outside the perceiver's awareness. For example, repeated exposure to subliminal stimuli (see Chapter 6) increases liking for the stimuli, which even generalizes to other similar stimuli (Monahan, Murphy & Zajonc, 2000). Sometimes, mere exposure has an even stronger effect on liking when people are not aware they have been exposed to a stimulus (Bornstein & D'Agostino, 1992). You may be able to remember a time when you 'just liked' or 'just didn't like' someone you met. In such a case, you may have been unaware that you already knew someone who was similar

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to this person – your judgements of the 'new' person were clouded by your exposure to the other person. Zajonc (1980) argued that, in such a case, emotions are often more instant than thinking. So your 'gut' reaction to a person, while being a result of some kind of exposure, is preceded by a strong emotional response. Again, this reaction has adaptive functions. We need to be aware when a new stimulus may cause us danger. On the other hand, an automatic negative evaluation of a person may explain the way that people occasionally react strongly and negatively to people who seem unfamiliar in terms of their skin colour or some other distinguishing feature. Such strong immediate reactions can potentially be a source of prejudice.

Thus, proximity and familiarity do not always lead to liking and attraction. For example, you can probably imagine that if a person lives close to an annoying neighbour with a dog that barks in the middle of the night, liking is more likely to *decrease* with proximity and familiarity. In general, when a person's initial reaction to a stimulus is negative, repeated exposure will have the opposite effect than when the initial reaction was positive and liking will decrease (Swap, 1977). Proximity can also sometimes lead to hostility. For example, many assaults and murders occur among close others. Domestic violence is a significant problem in the UK and in many other countries. An old saying goes that 'familiarity breeds contempt', and in some key respects this is true, with significant consequences.

A recent meta-analysis confirmed that familiarity does not necessarily increase liking. Montoya, Horton, Vevea, Citkowicz and Lauber (2017) analysed the results of 81 articles on the mere exposure effect, looking at the influence of repeated exposure to different types of stimuli delivered in different modalities (e.g., visually and auditorily). The findings revealed that instead of familiarity generally increasing liking, after a certain number of exposures liking actually decreased. That is, Montoya et al. observed what is called an 'inverted U' function such that liking increases with repeated exposure but then decreases after a certain number of exposures (see also Bornstein, 1989 for an earlier meta-analysis).

Some modern relationships are, of course, not dependant on familiarity, at least in terms of physical proximity. Most of you will use social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram

or Snapchat to continue friendships with people who have moved away, or to forge new friendships with people you have only briefly, or have never met in person. Some of you may have used dating websites like 'eharmony' or 'mysinglefriend' to meet prospective romantic partners. Many of you will keep in touch with your friends and family via email and Skype. In such cases, people can be thousands of miles apart and yet still like one another (Chan & Cheng, 2004). They may see each other frequently, infrequently or never, and yet still be friends or develop long-lasting romantic relationships. People who meet online may also meet in 'real life' or may never meet at all and yet a social bond can be very strong.

Computer-mediated communication and other electronic means of communication are, however, limited in some respects. For example, as we discussed in Chapter 5, people lack many of the social cues that are typical in face-to-face conversations (e.g., Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Tanis & Postmes, 2003; Whitty & Gavin, 2001). The absence of such social cues also provides scope for dishonesty and people may not, in fact, be all they seem (e.g., Toma, 2016; Whitty & Joinson, 2008). People can conceal aspects of their identity they do not like and instead enhance those features of themselves (their looks and personality) that they think will be appealing to others (see also Chapter 2 where we discuss the phenomenon of narcissism). Also, some findings suggest that people find it difficult to form friendships in cyberspace and increased time spent on the Internet is associated with feelings of depression and loneliness (Kraut et al., 1998). People can also become addicted to the Internet and their mobile phones, often with negative consequences for relationships. For example, Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas (2018) found that looking at a mobile phone during conversations (also known as 'phubbing' – 'phone' 'snubbing') leads to lower perceived relationship quality. The extent to which people engage in this behaviour is a direct consequence of their addiction to their mobile phones (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016; see also Chapter 8).

However, on the positive side, the growth of the Internet allows people to communicate with others who they would not otherwise have had the opportunity to meet. People with similar interests can more easily find each other than once was the case, and some findings suggest that people do form lasting friendships with people they meet on the Internet (e.g., Bargh, McKenna & Fitzsimons, 2002; McKenna & Bargh, 2000). People also tend to like people they first met on the Internet more than those they have met in real life (McKenna, Green & Gleason, 2002). Crucially, electronic communication and forms of interaction such as Internet dating are easy and inexpensive, and people are increasingly technologically savvy, so these new means of communication do not necessarily seem daunting.

EXPLORING FURTHER

The documentary film *Catfish* depicts the relationship between photographer Nev Schulman and a young girl called Abby who contacts him to ask permission to paint one of his photographs. As their online relationship unfolds via Facebook, Nev becomes involved with Abby's older sister Megan. However, as time goes on, it becomes clear that Abby and Megan are not all they seem to be. Nev goes to Michigan to meet Megan, Abby and their family and what he finds there is quite a surprise. If you get a chance, watch *Catfish* and think about what questions it raises about the development and maintenance of relationships in the digital age. Nev Schulman now stars in a reality TV show by the same name, in which he helps people find out the truth about their online relationship partners – people who they have never met and suspect are other than what they claim to be. The term 'catfishing' has become part of popular vernacular.

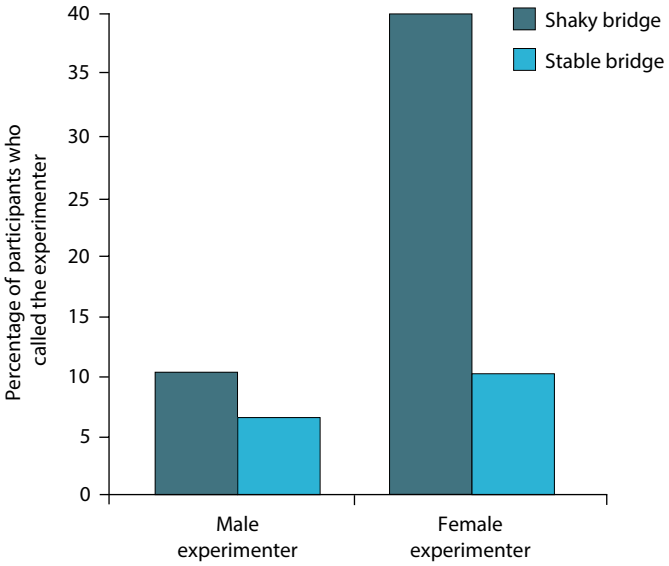

FIGURE 7.4 Excitation transfer Male participants were more attracted to a female experimenter when they had been put in the arousing situation of being asked to cross a shaky bridge.

Source: Data from Dutton and Aron (1974), Study 1

Physiological arousal

Another situational factor that influences attraction is physiological arousal, which can lead to a process called **excitation transfer**. This occurs when the arousal caused by one stimulus is added to the arousal of another stimulus and the overall arousal felt is attributed incorrectly to the second stimulus. This phenomenon was demonstrated in a classic study by Dutton and Aron (1974). In this study, male participants completed a questionnaire and were then asked to cross either a shaky or stable bridge to pass the questionnaire to the experimenter (who was either male or female). The dependent variable in this study was whether the participants called the experimenter with any further queries about the study. While the participants were generally unlikely to call the male experimenter, the shakiness or stability of the bridge significantly influenced the likelihood that they would call the female experimenter (see Figure 7.4). Specifically, the participants were much more likely to call a female experimenter if they had crossed the shaky bridge than if they crossed the stable bridge. It was argued that the arousal felt by the participants who crossed the shaky bridge was transferred to the female experimenter, to whom the participants then felt more attracted. Several other studies have demonstrated the misattribution of other types of arousal for attraction (e.g., Allen, Kenrick, Linder & McCall, 1989; White, Fishbein & Rutsein, 1981; Van Assche et al., 2017; Zillman, 1972).

Excitation transfer A phenomenon that occurs when the arousal from one stimulus is added to the arousal of a second stimulus. The overall arousal is misattributed to the second stimulus.

Psychological determinants of attraction

Physical determinants of attraction are very powerful. However, in social psychology it is rare that one or two factors explain the whole picture. In this case, one's attraction to another person cannot solely be explained by their physical attractiveness, otherwise everyone would want to have relationships with the most attractive people and many would be left alone. Also, proximity alone cannot explain attraction, otherwise everyone would be best friends with their neighbours, which, of course, is not always the case. TV programmes such as *Neighbours from Hell* will certainly attest to this. Typically, a combination of factors is important in determining who is attracted to whom. This is where psychological factors also become important. First, we will consider how the basic human need to affiliate with others influences our attraction to others.

Need to affiliate

Need to affiliate The motive to seek and maintain relationships with others.

Psychologists argue that a desire to seek and maintain interpersonal relationships with others – that is, the **need to affiliate** – is as fundamental to our psychological wellbeing as food and water are to our physical wellbeing (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Essentially, affiliation keeps us alive. Some evidence suggests that people respond to facial cues of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in others (Hassin & Trope, 2000) and even that we process faces and facial information differently from less biologically important stimuli (Ro, Russell & Lavie, 2001). Thus, we process others' reactions to us and even show a preference at an early age for faces over other stimuli (e.g., Valenza, Simion, Cassia & Umiltaa, 1996). Our attraction to others is driven by a psychological need to be involved in social relationships.

Of course, people differ in their need to affiliate. Like many other social psychological constructs, there are broad variations in the extent to which people seek out human contact. Some people are predisposed to want a higher level of affiliation than others (e.g., Craig, Koestner & Zuroff, 1994). For example, some people seek many relationships, whereas others would prefer to be alone for much of the time. There are also situational factors that influence the extent to which people seek relationships with others. For example, making people aware of the inevitability of their own death leads them to want to be around others more (Wisman & Koole, 2003). There is also a common wisdom that people like to be around others in times of trouble, especially when they are anxious or frightened. In a classic study, Schachter (1959) demonstrated that in a situation where experimental participants were expecting to be given electric shocks, the participants wanted to be around others who were also facing the situation rather than being alone. It is possible to consider examples of this phenomenon in everyday life. For example, people come together during major disasters. Recall the 33 trapped Chilean miners in August 2010 and the rallying of their families and the community to maintain the physical and psychological wellbeing of the men. Families also rally together after the passing of a loved one. One reason they do this is because being around others helps people to understand their feelings and compare them with people who are sharing the same experiences and feelings. Working from social comparison theory, Schachter argued that comparing one's feelings with those of others reduces anxiety and makes a person less fearful of events because their feelings are shared. There is often safety in numbers.

Therefore, affiliation satisfies some fundamental psychological needs. However, if people's need to affiliate is not satisfied, this can result in negative consequences, such as feelings of rejection, sadness and anger (Williams et al., 2000; see also the discussion of social ostracism in Chapter 8). At a more extreme level, an unsatisfied need to affiliate can result in less effective cognitive functioning (Baumeister, Twenge & Nuss, 2002). Studies of social deprivation, which we discuss later, allow us to better understand some of the consequences of an unfulfilled need for affiliation. Note, however, that cultural groups differ in terms of their reactions to ostracism (Uskul & Over, 2017). Specifically, the extent to which people within a culture are socially interdependent – that is, they have strong social bonds – influences their reactions to being ostracized. Research suggests that people in cultures where social bonds are important are less likely to suffer the negative effects of ostracism. Negative reactions to being left out are therefore not necessarily universal.

Emotions

Attraction to others is also influenced by **affect**, or emotions. Positive feelings lead people to evaluate others positively, and negative affect is more likely to lead to negative evaluations (Byrne, 1997). This effect can work very simply. For example, imagine if you met someone for the first time and that person complimented you on your new bag. You are much more likely to form a positive impression of (and be attracted to) that person than another who said they thought your bag was hideous. Research suggests that we like people who make us feel good (e.g., Shapiro, Baumeister & Kessler, 1991). This effect can be explicit, as in the above example, or it can work in a less obvious way. Specifically, some research suggests that simply being around someone when something good happens to us can make us more attracted to that person (e.g., Olson & Fazio, 2001). Through a process like classical conditioning, we associate the positive feeling with the person who is present, which makes us like them more even though they have nothing to do with it. Perhaps you fondly remember people you met on holiday or at a music festival. Maybe the positive emotions you experienced at these events are somewhat responsible for the positive feelings you experience now. We will discuss this effect in more detail when we discuss the theories of attraction later in the chapter.

Affect Emotional state consisting of feelings and moods.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Below is a scale used to measure need for affiliation. It measures an individual's desire to spend time with others, a lack of desire to spend time with others, a desire to complete tasks alone and a desire to work with others to complete tasks. Have a go at doing the scale yourself. Read each statement and rate whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) or strongly disagree (SD) with each. Calculate your total score for need for affiliation by adding all the scores together. An average score is typically somewhere around 32.

	SA	A	D	SD
I like to go to places and settings with lots of people.	1	2	3	4
I would never want to live completely on my own.	1	2	3	4
In my leisure time, I prefer to do things together with others.	1	2	3	4
I cannot stand being alone.	1	2	3	4
I prefer to go my own way alone.	1	2	3	4
I really prefer to stay as short a time as possible at occasions where there are lots of people.	4	3	2	1
When on vacation, I avoid contact with other vacationers as much as possible.	4	3	2	1
It is not my thing to undertake something with a group of people.	4	3	2	1
It sounds awful to have a job in which you are alone.	1	2	3	4
I find it stressful to have people around me constantly.	4	3	2	1
I like to talk to others.	1	2	3	4
Even when I am in a relationship, I still have a strong need to be alone.	4	3	2	1
The ideal way to spend my leisure time is to do something on my own.	4	3	2	1
I like to be alone.	4	3	2	1
I love teamwork.	1	2	3	4
I don't like to undertake something totally on my own.	1	2	3	4

Source: Buunk, Nauta & Molleman (2005). Copyright © 2005 by John Wiley Sons, Inc. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Similarity of attitudes, interests and values

Research suggests that people find others more attractive when they are similar to themselves in ways other than their level of physical attractiveness. In particular, one of the most important psychological determinants of attraction is similarity of attitudes, interests and values. Sir Francis Galton ([1870]1952) provided the first empirical evidence of this. He obtained correlational data from married couples, which indicated that the wives' and husbands' attitudes were quite similar. Additional findings suggest that these similarities are greater than would occur by chance (Hunt, 1935). Further, Newcomb (1956, 1961) asked a sample of male US college students to complete a series of questionnaires about their attitudes and values, in exchange for free accommodation.

The students completed one set of questionnaires prior to their arrival at university and then throughout the year. They were also asked to rate the attractiveness of their fellow students. Newcomb found that early on in the year, proximity was the key predictor of attraction. Echoing Festinger et al.'s (1950) study, students tended to like their classmates who lived closest to them. However, after the initial settling-in period, and as the academic year progressed, attraction was more closely related to similarity of attitudes and values, as measured before the students met each other (see also Gaunt, 2006; Lee & Bond, 1998; Luo & Klohnen, 2005).

The importance of attitude similarity was further reinforced by Byrne (1971), who argued that attraction towards a person is directly – and linearly – related to the proportion of attitudes that one shares with that person. This 'law of attraction' (Clore, 1976; Clore & Byrne, 1974) also works to reinforce existing attraction, such that the things people do can make them even more attractive. For example, imagine you have a friend you like because you share similar values and interests. If you then find out that your friend loves a particular music group (they are your absolute favourite group), you will probably find your friend even more attractive. People tend to match themselves with others who share interests such as these, as well as leisure activities (Sprecher, 1998). There is some evidence that attraction can be even stronger when people share rare attitudes – that is, attitudes that are not shared by many other people. In five studies, Alves (2018) asked people to rate some things they liked, such as movies, music and hobbies. He then tested whether people's rare (vs. their common) interests influenced attraction towards a target person. Results strongly revealed that people were more attracted to the target when the shared attitudes were more obscure. Perhaps therefore, rather than using algorithms matching people on the number of shared interests, dating sites might be better off matching people who share more peculiar interests.

It is also the case that we often choose to be around people who have similar interests to ourselves in our basic everyday choices. For example, everyone in your class chose to study psychology, so you all have some interests in common even before you begin to interact (see Figure 7.5). Thus, the effects of similarity can work in quite a subtle way – people seek out situations where they will be able to interact with similar others.

Getty Images/PeopleImages,Yuri Arcurs

FIGURE 7.5 Attitude similarity and attraction Students of psychology all have something in common – an interest in psychology – and research findings have shown that attitude similarity increases attraction.

Balance theory
People sharing similar attitudes are likely to reach balance – a positive emotional state. Attitude dissimilarity can lead to negative emotions, a need to restore the balance, or indifference between individuals.

Similarity may be important for a number of reasons. First, some theorists argue that similarity helps people find balance in relationships. According to **balance theory** (Heider, 1958a; Newcomb, 1961), people compare their attitudes with those of others and if they are similar in some key respect, then balance is achieved. Balance enhances positive feelings, which makes people attracted to each other. Attitude dissimilarity, on the other hand, causes imbalance. Such imbalance produces negative feelings and makes attraction less likely. In such a case, people are more likely to be indifferent to one another. In the first place, however, attitude similarity needs to mean something. Why does it matter that others' attitudes are similar to our own? The answer is perhaps social comparison (Festinger, 1954; see also Chapter 2). One way that people evaluate the validity of their own attitudes and beliefs is by comparing them to others' attitudes and beliefs. Finding out that other people share our beliefs means that the beliefs must have some basis, and this makes us feel good. Another reason for the importance of similarity, like proximity and familiarity, may be that from an evolutionary perspective it is adaptive to like similar others. Dissimilar others may present a danger to survival.

EXPLORING FURTHER

The research we have discussed with respect to balance theory seems a bit old. What is new (if anything) for balance theory? Use this as a search term on Google Scholar to find new papers related to this theory from the 1950s. Write down one novel finding that has emerged in the past ten years. Note that you may need to narrow the search by including additional search terms such as 'relationships'.

People who are similar in personality and interpersonal skills are also more likely to be attracted to one another (e.g., Liu, Ludeke, Haubrich, Gondan-Rochon & Zettler, 2018; Sprecher, 1998; Stevens, Owens & Schaefer, 1990). For example, in a study of gay male relationships, Boyden, Carroll and Maier (1984) found that men sought men with similar personalities. Specifically, men who scored high on masculinity desired other men with masculine traits. On the other hand, men who scored high on femininity sought other men with more feminine traits. The same preference for similar personality traits applies in heterosexual romantic relationships and friendships (Acitelli, Kenny & Weiner, 2001). Even in children as young as three years old, similarity (e.g., on dimensions such as food preferences and toy preferences) predicts liking (Fawcett & Markson, 2010). Also, Sprecher (1998) found that personality factors such as warmth and kindness were more important to people in relationships than interests, values and attitudes.

Self-disclosure
Willingness to share information about oneself and one's feelings with another person.

Furthermore, people who have a similar communication style are more compatible (Burleson & Samter, 1996; Marquez, Zhao, Kuhlmann & Riley, 2015), whereas those who have different interpersonal styles are less likely to have successful relationships (Burleson, 1994). Specifically, some people are more willing to disclose information about themselves than other people. This willingness – called **self-disclosure** – is an important factor in determining long-term relationship success. People tend to like people more who reveal more about themselves and their thoughts (Collins & Miller, 1994). Also, people tend to reveal more to the people they like and trust. Self-disclosure is important for building trust in a relationship and making people feel safe (Cvetkovich & Lofstedt, 1999). Self-disclosure also encourages the other person in the relationship to disclose information, which builds further trust and rapport (Joinson & Paine, 2007; Reis & Shaver, 1988). Mutual disclosure (or disclosure reciprocity) increases attraction and can deepen intimacy in an existing relationship (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999). A relationship with mutual self-disclosure tends to be happy, satisfied and enduring (Sprecher, 1987). Increased self-disclosure online can also increase feelings of liking (Kashian, Jang, Shin,

Dai & Walther, 2017). However, online self-disclosers need to be careful. Sometimes it can be 'too much' and when self-disclosure is perceived to be inappropriate, feelings of closeness and intimacy can actually decrease (Lin & Utz, 2017).

People from similar backgrounds are also more likely to be attracted to one another (Watson et al., 2004). In the study by Newcomb (1961) described earlier, men who were from similar demographic backgrounds (e.g., they were both from a rural area) were more likely to be friends. Also, findings show that people like others who are similar in other features such as wealth (Buston & Emlen, 2003). This basic effect of similarity is quite far-reaching. Findings in one study even showed that people were more attracted to others who had similar names to themselves, whose arbitrary experimental code numbers resembled their own birthday numbers, and whose surnames shared letters with their own surnames (Jones, Pelham, Carvallo & Mirenberg, 2004). Going back to what we said earlier about the matching hypothesis, it really does seem to be the case that people like others who are similar to themselves on some dimension, and not just the dimension of physical attractiveness.

But, what about the popular saying 'opposites attract'? This is commonly portrayed in movies and on TV when seemingly polar opposites who think and behave completely differently pair off and walk away into the sunset. Does this really happen? Indeed, there are some interpersonal contexts in which **complementarity** leads to liking (e.g., Sadler & Woody, 2003). For example, in one study, Amodio and Showers (2005) found that when people wanted a stable, long-lasting relationship, similarity was important and people sought partners who were similar to themselves in key respects. However, when people were looking for a 'fling', dissimilarity was more important. Perhaps the adventure of being with someone completely different to oneself provides excitement in a short-term, low commitment relationship. However, on the whole, social psychological research suggests that rather than 'opposites attract', 'birds of a feather flock together'. When considering attitudes, values, intellect, ability and many preferences, similarity is a key predictor of attraction. Of course, we may think of pairs who are 'opposites' in one important respect, but in general, these pairings are likely to be similar in many other fundamental respects. Similarity increases liking, and dissimilarity in attitudes, interests and preferences can lead to disliking and avoidance (Chen & Kenrick, 2002; Mallinas, Crawford & Cole, 2018; Norton, Frost & Ariely, 2007; Singh & Ho, 2000; Tan & Singh, 1995). In particular, if people are dissimilar on key important attitudes and moral convictions, avoidance may be even stronger. You can probably think of many examples such as dislike for opposing political parties (Mallinas et al., 2018; Rosenbaum, 1986) or even people from different religious or ethnic backgrounds (Biernat, Vescio & Green, 1996).

Complementarity
The idea that people seek out traits in potential relationship partners that complement, or add what is missing, to their own.

Like judgements of attractiveness, the effect of similarity on liking seems to be consistent across cultures. For example, Brewer (1968) interviewed an extensive sample of people from African tribal groups and found that perceived similarity was a strong determinant of attraction between tribes. People tended to avoid contact with other tribes whose attitudes were thought to be different, but when attitudes were perceived to be similar, it was possible to have close contact with the other tribe.

Mutual liking

A person's attraction to another person is often determined by reciprocity. Does the other person like them too? This effect of *mutual liking* is also called the reciprocity principle. In general, we like people who like us and dislike people who dislike us. Dittes and Kelley (1956) demonstrated this effect in a now classic study. The researchers put student participants into small discussion groups and told them that their fellow group members either liked or disliked them. The students who thought that they were liked were more attracted to their group. Mutual liking can even overcome some important differences. In the previous section we discussed how important similarity, especially similarity of attitudes, is in determining

attraction. However, Gold, Ryckman and Mosley (1984) found that when a young woman expressed interest in male participants (by use of nonverbal cues such as attentive listening), she was liked more than when she expressed no interest – even when the male participants knew that she disagreed with them on central issues. The perception that a person likes us is therefore a significant determinant of our liking for them (Berscheid & Walster, 1987; Kenny & Nasby, 1980; Montoya & Insko, 2008). Discovering that someone likes you may also awaken romantic feelings that might not ordinarily have been apparent (Berscheid & Walster, 1987). Again, this is another common feature in popular films. Best friends, having difficulties in their current relationships, suddenly realize that they have loved each other all along. The mutual liking they had for each other awakened their underlying attraction.

However, it is not all good news. Eastwick, Finkel, Mochon and Ariely (2007) used a speed dating paradigm to study mutual liking. They found that people who were selective in their liking, that is, they did not like everyone, generally experienced more reciprocal liking. However, those who were unselective, that is, they wanted to date everyone, were perceived as less desirable partners. Therefore, the belief that a discerning person thinks that one is special can facilitate liking, but a less discerning person inhibits liking. This suggests that who likes us might be as important as whether we are liked at all. You can probably remember a time when someone liked you and you simply did not like them back. Stambush and Mattingly (2010) showed that people's self-esteem, mood and ratings of their own attractiveness can actually drop if they think that an unattractive person expressed interest in them. This effect was particularly marked for female participants. This reflects the complexity of mutual liking, and at this point, it is good to reflect back upon the 'beauty is good' stereotype we discussed earlier (Dion et al., 1972). It seems that attraction is influenced even by being liked by attractive others rather than those we find less appealing.

Culture

We have mentioned culture throughout this discussion and many of the findings discussed suggest that several aspects of attraction – in particular what is deemed physically attractive – are universal. In other words, there seems to be little variation across cultures in terms of what constitutes an attractive face. Also, there is a large set of personality traits that are, perhaps unsurprisingly, seen as universally attractive, such as friendliness, happiness and likeability (Wheeler & Kim, 1997).

However, this is not to say that culture is irrelevant in determining who is attracted to whom. This is far from the truth. For example, Liu, Campbell and Condie (1995) found that heterosexuals of four different ethnic groups in the USA (African, Asian, Latino and European) preferred to date within their own group, despite all groups rating European Americans as either more attractive or of higher status than members of their own group. Cultural similarity is therefore important. Further, it is possible that other social factors, such as the approval of one's family and friends, help determine who people are most attracted to (Shenhav, Campos & Goldberg, 2016). It is perhaps not surprising that even in multicultural societies, people tend to form romantic relationships more with people from their own culture. Preference for one's own culture when finding friends and partners tends to occur in the closest realms of society.

THEORIES OF ATTRACTION

Now we know something about the physical and psychological factors that determine attraction, we move on to theories of interpersonal attraction that attempt to link these factors together. There are two key theories of attraction. The first – social exchange theory – is based on an economic approach to human behaviour, arguing that relationship satisfaction depends on the 'costs' and 'rewards' of the relationship. The second – equity theory – follows a similar line of logic, arguing that relationship satisfaction depends on the extent to which the outcomes that

people receive from a relationship are proportional to their contributions. The key difference between the two is that social exchange theory argues that in relationships, people are after the most rewards for the least cost they have to put in. On the other hand, equity theory posits that people are not simply after rewards with little cost – they also need equity and fairness in relationships. We review these theories in turn. We also discuss less prominent theories of attraction arguing that attraction is based on reinforcement.

Social exchange theory

Generally speaking, it is rewarding to be in a relationship. For example, it is rewarding when someone validates our attitudes or shares our values. Also, it is nice to be liked by an attractive person who we like too. It follows that the more social rewards a person offers, the more we will be attracted to that person. On the other hand, if we perceive the *costs* as outweighing the benefits of being in a relationship with a person, then we will be less attracted to that person. In a way, this is like drawing up a mental 'pros and cons' list, which people often do when they make important life decisions. If the 'pros' outweigh the 'cons', the likelihood is that the relationship will be a success. If the opposite is the case, the relationship is less likely to succeed. You may remember some of your own friendships that felt like they were 'more give than take'. This can be unsatisfying and jeopardize the chances of the relationship's success.

The basic idea that relationships work like economic exchange, much like a marketplace, has been expanded by psychologists and sociologists to form complex theories of social exchange that mainly deal with close relationships such as romantic relationships (e.g., Homans, 1961; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). **Social exchange theory** posits that people's evaluation of such a relationship depends on their perception of:

1. the rewards they gain from the relationship
2. the costs they incur from the relationship
3. the relationship they deserve and the likelihood that they could have a better relationship with another person.

Social exchange theory How we feel about our relationships depends on our perception of the rewards we gain from the relationship and costs we incur. We also evaluate whether or not we could have a 'better' relationship.

MANGOSTOCK/FOTOLIA.COM

FIGURE 7.6 Social exchange theory Social exchange theory argues that people's evaluation of their relationships depends on the perception of what they 'get' from the relationship, their perception of what they 'give' and their perception of the relationship as 'worthy' of them, that is, could they get someone better?

People are sensitive to the rewards and costs of their relationship. The relationship 'marketplace' is all about maximizing profits and minimizing losses, so we want to interact with people who offer the best profit. That is, people evaluate their relationship and judge whether or not this is the best they could have. Are they getting adequate reward for what they put in? Is there something better to compare it to? However, there is another person in the relationship, so there is an *exchange* of rewards and costs, as the name of the theory suggests. The other person in the relationship is also making their own cost-reward analysis of the relationship, which may be similar to – or completely different than – their partner's. Thus, social exchange theory proposes that the outcomes for the two people in the relationship are jointly dependent on their actions. This kind of exchange occurs constantly in relationships and sometimes people do not even realize that social exchanges are being made. For example, we might put up with the costs of a partner's bad habits (e.g., talking with their mouth full of food, leaving worn socks around the house) because they are kind and loving (a benefit). Likewise, our partners may put up with our bad habits and awkward friends (costs) because we are incredibly good-looking, have a lot of money and have a good sense of humour (benefits). Thus, there are many different types of costs and rewards and many levels on which exchanges are made (Foa & Foa, 1975). Many are trivial and short-lived but some are exchanges that have long-term, important consequences. Whatever the exchange, we can think of the outcome of a relationship as being determined by a mathematical formula: outcomes = rewards – costs.

Comparison level People's expectations about the level of costs and rewards based on previous relationships.

Relationship satisfaction also depends on one's **comparison level**. Specifically, over the years people have plenty of relationships with others so they have come to expect certain costs and benefits of being in a relationship. From these expectations, people have an idea of what their future relationships will be like (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Some people expect more rewards than costs from relationships, and if a relationship fails to meet their expected high standards, they will be disappointed. On the other hand, some people expect fewer rewards and more costs and they may be pleased with less rewarding relationships because at least it is what they expect.

Comparison level for alternatives People's expectations about the costs and benefits they might receive if they were in a different relationship.

It is important to note that people may also have a **comparison level for alternatives**. In other words, they may have the perception that they could be in a better relationship than the one they are currently in. This concern with alternatives – or the idea that there are indeed 'plenty of fish in the sea' – may mean that people leave relationships because they feel there is something better out there. On the other hand, people who expect that the alternatives could be worse than they already have, that is, they have a low comparison level for alternatives, may be more likely to stay in a costly relationship (Simpson, 1987). For such people, it may be a case of 'better the devil you know'. It is also important to consider that what is a cost for one person may not seem so costly to another. Furthermore, what is seen as rewarding for one person may not be so rewarding to others. Social exchange theory therefore allows for quite a bit of variation in relationships.

Social exchange theory has gained much support in social psychological research. For example, Le and Agnew (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of over 50 studies demonstrating that relationship breakdown is strongly related to a lack of commitment. Over time, relationship partners become interdependent (Rusbult & van Lange, 2003), fulfilling the needs of each other (Le & Agnew, 2003). Rewards, costs and comparison levels are crucial in determining relationship satisfaction and commitment (Rusbult, Martz & Agnew, 1998).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Choose two of your past relationships – either friendships or romantic relationships – that you no longer have. Make a list of the rewards you gained from the relationship. Make another list of the costs and sacrifices you had to make as part of the relationship. Did the costs outweigh the benefits? Or did you get a sense that you overbenefited from the relationship? In any case, how did you feel about the situation you were in? Are there other reasons why these relationships are no longer a part of your life?

Now take a few minutes to think of a current relationship. How does your relationship fare on the following scale?

+3	**I am getting a much better deal**
+2	**I am getting a moderately better deal**
+1	**I am getting a slightly better deal**
0	**We are both getting an equally good or bad deal**
–1	**They are getting a slightly better deal**
–2	**They are getting a moderately better deal**
–3	**They are getting a much better deal**

This is a scale often used to measure relationship equity, which you will read about in the next section.

Equity theory

Perhaps social exchange theory does not quite capture an essential factor in determining relationship success – the notion of equity or fairness. **Equity theory** posits that people are not simply after the most rewards and the least costs. They also need equity and fairness. In other words, the cost-reward 'payoff' should be approximately the same for both parties in the relationship (Adams, 1965; Hatfield, Walster & Berscheid, 1978). In a similar way to social exchange, equity can be seen as a mathematical formula (Adams, 1965). Equity exists when: (A's rewards – costs) + A's inputs = (B's rewards – costs) + B's inputs. When a relationship is equitable, the party's outcomes (rewards – costs) are roughly equal to the other person's. In this respect, distributive justice (Homans, 1961) has been reached and outcomes are fair, based on what both parties have put in and what they have got out.

Equity theory The theory that people are most satisfied with relationships in which the cost-reward ratio is approximately the same for both parties.

According to equity theory, people are happiest in equal relationships. Equitable relationships are also the most stable. On the other hand, some relationships suffer an imbalance in the cost-reward ratio for each party. One person may take more than they give; the other may give more than they take. This can lead to tension and dissatisfaction. For example, Schafer and Keith (1980) surveyed a sample of married couples across a wide age range, taking note of those who felt that their relationships were unfair (e.g., one spouse did not contribute enough to the cleaning or cooking). Findings revealed that people who perceived their relationships to be inequitable felt more unhappy and distressed. Sprecher (2016) found support for a causal link between equity and relationship satisfaction. In an experimental study, she asked participants to write about a past situation in their relationship when they either overbenefited, underbenefited, or where there was equity. Participants who were asked to write about an underbenefiting situation reported more distress than those asked to write about overbenefiting. Those who wrote about a situation in which there was equity reported the least amount of distress. The priming task also influenced people's overall satisfaction with the relationship along the same lines. That is, writing about equity situations led to higher relationship satisfaction ratings and writing about underbenefiting led to the lowest level of relationship satisfaction.

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Underbenefited partners will seek to restore balance to the relationship so that they no longer feel like the relationship is too costly. Alternatively, they may attempt to restructure their perceptions of their own costs and rewards so that the ratios do not feel inequitable. If a balance cannot be reached, the relationship is less likely to succeed (Adams, 1965). However, perhaps surprisingly, overbenefited partners also typically seek to restore equity. Why do they do this? Social exchange theory is less able to describe why low-cost, high-gain partners also attempt to rebalance inequitable relationships. Instead, theorists explain this effect as a result of a powerful social norm prioritizing equity. Even the most profitable partners will eventually come to feel guilty for taking too much away from a relationship. Equity is a pervasive social norm and deviations from such norms, where situations are unfair, make everyone feel uncomfortable. Having said this, research shows that restoring equity is more of a concern for partners who benefit less from relationships (Buunk & Schaufeli, 1999; Sprecher, 2001; Sprecher, 2016, Sprecher & Schwartz, 1994; Van Yperen & Buunk, 1990). Also, people may not always prefer an equity norm (Deutsch, 1975). Furthermore, men prefer an equity norm more than women. Instead, women tend to prefer an *equality* norm, where everyone receives the same no matter what (Major & Adams, 1983; Major & Deaux, 1982), to an equity norm where outcomes are equal based on costs. It is important to note that people do not go about their daily business calculating what they have done for others and what they have received in return (Clark, 1986). In most close relationships, people do not always keep score of their costs and rewards – this would be time-consuming and perhaps a bit sad – and, indeed, many relationships succeed with one selfless partner (Buunk & Van Yperen, 1991). However, there is generally a strong norm of equity in close relationships. Another key norm in relationships is the **norm of reciprocity** – to receive, we must also give.

Norm of reciprocity In relationships, this is the norm that if people are to take, they must also give.

Reinforcement and rewards

Other approaches propose that attraction is a result of direct reinforcement. As we mentioned earlier, we sometimes like people who are present when something good happens to us, even though they sometimes have no relation to the reward (Lott & Lott, 1972). In particular, instant reinforcement is powerful. For example, Lott, Aponte, Lott

and McGinley (1969) found that children liked a person who they saw after immediately receiving a reward, rather than after a delay of a few seconds. In a variation of the reinforcement model, Byrne and Clore's (1970) **reinforcement affect model** posits that people can be liked (or disliked) depending on their association with positive (or negative) feelings. To illustrate this effect, Lewicki (1985) asked an experimenter to be unfriendly to a sample of participants. At the end of the study, participants were asked to hand their responses to one of two experimenters: one who looked like the unfriendly experimenter and one who did not. Overwhelmingly, the participants chose the person who did not resemble the original unfriendly experimenter. In an opposite condition, the experimenter was friendly. In this case, the students chose the person who resembled the experimenter. In a more recent study, Berk and Andersen (2000) asked participants (perceivers) to interact with a naive target who either did or did not appear to resemble the perceiver's own (positively or negatively regarded) significant other. Independent judges rated the positive affect expressed in the targets' behaviours. It was found that the targets expressed more positive affective behaviours when they resembled the perceiver's own positively valued significant other rather than when the significant other was negatively valued. This suggests that the positive feelings of the perceiver transferred to the naive target, suggesting a means by which present relationships may resemble past relationships.

Reinforcement affect model This model of attraction posits that we like people who are present when we experience positive feelings.

Furthermore, Clore and Byrne (1974) argued that people associate others with features of the environment. If the features are positive, this evokes positive emotions and a positive response (liking) is likely to emerge. However, if the features are negative, this evokes negative emotions and a negative response (disliking) is more likely. This type of effect is sometimes called *liking by association,* or the *reward theory of attraction.*

Other experiments confirm that reinforcement is important in determining liking. For example, Griffitt (1970) asked students to evaluate a person while either sitting in a pleasant, comfortable room or an unpleasant, hot room. As above, people rated others more positively if they were in a pleasant environment (Maslow & Mintz, 1956). One message from these findings is that it is good for relationships to be associated with positive experiences such as romantic candlelit dinners and holidays (Hatfield & Walster, 1981). The findings also help explain why, in general, people are attracted to warm and trustworthy individuals (Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas & Giles, 1999; Wojciszke, Bazinska & Jaworski, 1998).

LOVE AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Thus far, our discussion has been about the factors that influence people's attraction to each other. Much of this is related to *liking*. Although many people believe in 'love at first sight', many would argue that attraction is what immediately draws a person to another, or what makes them like the other person. In this section, we distinguish the process of attraction and liking from that of *loving*. Many would agree that loving someone is quite different to simply liking them. We may not be able to work out exactly how to express it, but we know that **love** is something *more* than liking and is not simply a matter of quality. Social psychologists have taken great strides in understanding what love is, and how close, loving relationships work (e.g., Dion & Dion, 1988; Fehr, Harasymchuk & Sprecher, 2014; Fletcher, Simpson, Campbell & Overall, 2015; Sternberg & Sternberg, 2018). Studying love is difficult. For example, it is not possible to experimentally manipulate love in the laboratory, as it is to manipulate variables such as proximity and good looks. However, through survey and interview methods, social psychologists are learning more about love.

Love A grouping of emotions, behaviours and cognitions that a person can experience in intimate relationships.

So, what is love? Is love really just a lot of liking? Is romantic love just a lot of liking, but with sexual attraction? Unsurprisingly, it is difficult to define love. Love is often seen as an inexplicable and magical thing and something that is difficult for people to articulate. Sometimes love is desperately passionate, giddy and overwhelming and sometimes love just makes us feel warm and contented. What is it? Are there different kinds of love?

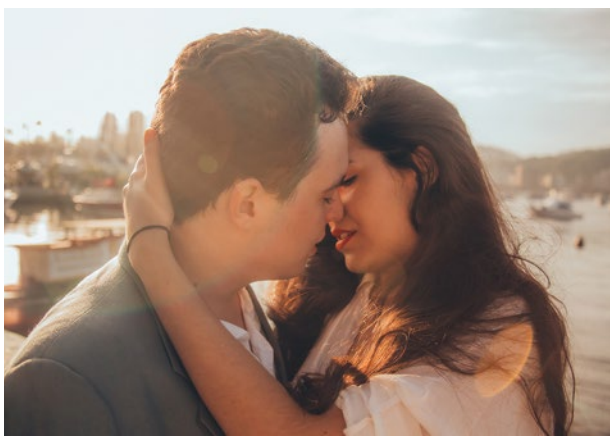
Researchers have distinguished liking as being different from loving. In particular, Rubin (1970) developed two questionnaires to measure what he argued to be two different constructs. He asked 198 undergraduate students to complete questions related to what he theorized to be about liking (e.g., 'I feel that —— is a very stable person' , 'I have confidence in ——'s opinions') and others that measured loving (e.g., 'I feel strong feelings of possessiveness towards ——', 'I would do almost anything for ——'). Crucially, Rubin asked participants to complete the scale based on how they felt about their romantic partner and a good friend. The results showed that good friends scored highly on the liking scale, but only romantic partners rated highly on the items related to loving. Also, analyses of different kinds of love, such as familial and romantic love, have distinguished between two distinct types of love that entail a combination of emotions that occur in intimate relationships: passionate and companionate love (Fehr, 1994; Hatfield & Walster, 1981). We focus first on the differences between these two types of love, with a primary focus on romantic relationships because this is what most of the research is about.

Passionate and companionate love

The love that people have for their friends and family members is obviously different from the love that people have for a romantic partner. However, even within romantic relationships, love can appear and feel different. Think of your close friends and you will see examples of people passionately in love and completely absorbed with each other. On the other hand, if you consider many elderly people, such as your grandparents, the passionate, all-consuming love has typically given way to a calmer, more stable and secure kind of love. Although both are referred to as *love,* they are clearly different (Berscheid & Meyers, 1996; Fehr & Russell, 1991; Vohs & Baumeister, 2004). Psychologists call the first type 'passionate love' and the second 'companionate love' (Hatfield, 1987; Hatfield, Feybesse, Narine & Rapson, 2016; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986) (see Figure 7.7).

(a) Passionate love

Photo by Henri Meilhac on Unsplash



(b) Companionate love

Getty Images/SolStock

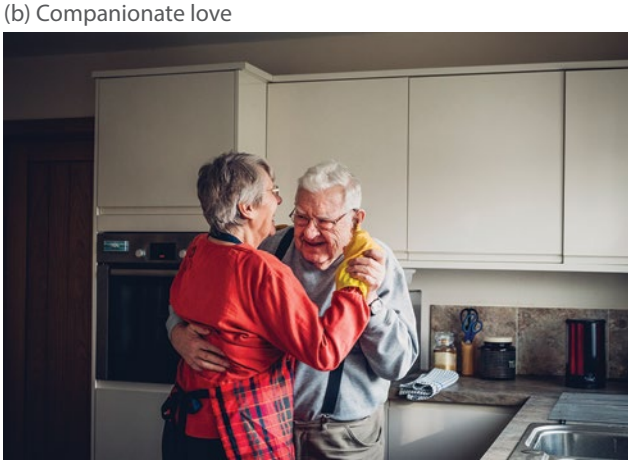


FIGURE 7.7 Passionate and companionate love Theorists distinguish between (a) passionate love, the all-consuming giddy love that people typically experience at the beginning of relationships, and (b) companionate, or more secure and stable love.

Passionate love is the type of love that involves intense feelings, uncontrollable thoughts and deep longing for another person. Passionate love often involves physical arousal, a rapid beating heart and shortness of breath among other physiological 'symptoms'. You will be familiar with the notion of love as a 'drug' in songs, or a 'bug' that affects people and makes them do silly things. They are referring to the concept of passionate love. In the presence of the object of affection, a person experiencing passionate love will feel happy and elated if the affection is reciprocated, but sad, desperate and jealous if the feelings are not returned (Fisher, 2004; Hatfield, 1987; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986; Regan & Berscheid, 1999). Passionate love is the feeling of loving someone but also being 'in love' (Berscheid, 1994). Passionate love is heightened by physiological arousal. For example, physical exercise, watching horror films and going on scary rides increase our romantic responses to people we find attractive (Foster, Witcher, Campbell & Green, 1998). Aron et al. (2005) have found that passionate love involves a strong biological element. Specifically, being in love engages dopamine-rich areas of the brain that are generally associated with reward (see also Takahashi et al., 2015). There is also a lot of evidence demonstrating the role of the hormone oxytocin in love and desire (e.g., Carter, 1998; Diamond, 2003, 2004; Gonzaga, Turner, Keltner, Campos & Altemus, 2006; Porges, 1998). Also, fMRI studies have shown that viewing pictures of romantic love activates parts of the brain's reward system that coincide with areas rich in oxytocin and vasopressin receptors (Bartels & Zeki, 2004). These overlap with, but are also different to, the regions of the brain that are activated when mothers view pictures of their children. Both types of relationships (romantic and maternal) deactivated regions of the brain associated with negative emotions.

Passionate love Love characterized by intense emotional and physical feelings for another person.

On the other hand, **companionate love** involves deep, secure feelings that are not accompanied by the frenzied, passionate and physical feelings that are associated with passionate love (Hatfield, 1987; Hatfield & Rapson, 2015). Theorists argue that this kind of love is common in relationships that once were passionate, such as marriages that last a long time. The partners may still be in a sexual relationship but without experiencing the level of intensity or 'spark' they once had (Argyle & Henderson, 1985). Even in the closest, most loving relationships, the spark does not necessarily last and some findings support this idea; for example, long-term married couples express affection much less than newlyweds (Huston & Chorost, 1994). Romantic relationships that last seem to depend more on the secure, stable, loving feelings that people have towards one another rather than the intense feelings experienced during the fiery first stages of a relationship. Findings show that companionate love activates different areas of the brain (Aron et al., 2005). Also, outside romantic relationships, companionate love is characteristic of non-sexual close friendships. The key characteristic of companionate love is a deep caring and affection for the other person – the kind of love that makes us feel warm, happy and nurtured.

Companionate love Love characterized by a deep caring and affection for another person.

Sternberg (1988) argued for a slightly more complex conceptualization of love based on three key factors: passion, intimacy and commitment, and that the type of love can be mapped onto a triangle of these factors, as in Figure 7.8.

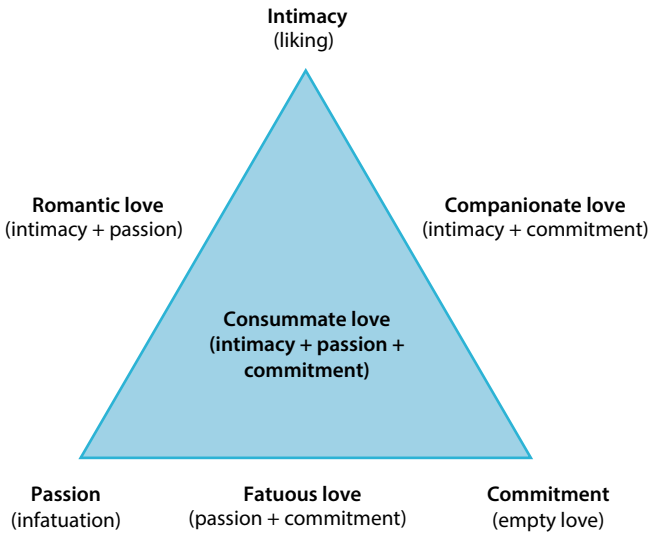


FIGURE 7.8 Triangular theory of love Sternberg argues that love is a combination of passion, intimacy and commitment and that combinations of each result in different kinds of love.

Source: Sternberg (1988). Reproduced by permission of Robert J. Sternberg

Other research has distinguished even more specifically between several different kinds of love in romantic relationships (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1995). Six love styles were identified by Lee (1973, 1976),

TABLE 7.1 The six types of love

Name	Style of love	Characteristics
Eros	Passionate love	Love is all-consuming. Sex is important. The feeling of 'love at first sight' is common
Ludus	Game-playing love	Love is a game. Lovers are more interested in quantity of relationships than quality. Sex is sport. Commitment is a trap. Infidelity is common
Storge	Friendship/ companionate love	Love grows from friendship. Commitment is important. Sex is less important. Intimacy without passion
Mania	Possessive love	Love is intense. Lovers are possessive, jealous, anxious and insecure. Sex is reassurance of love
Agape	Selfless love	Generous love. Lovers are unconditionally faithful, loving and caring. Sex is viewed as a gift
Pragma	Logical love	Practical and realistic love. Lovers think rationally and realistically about their partner. Sex is a means of reward and procreation

Source: Based on Hendrick and Hendrick (1995); Lee (1973, 1976)

who referred to these love styles as 'colours of love' (see Table 7.1). Findings suggest that there are gender differences in who displays the different types of love, with men scoring higher on eros and ludus than women, who were more pragmatic, storgic and manic (Hendrick, Hendrick, Foote & Slapion-Foote, 1984). Findings also suggest that there are cross-cultural differences in attitudes related to love. In particular, the factors of pragma, storge and ludus, which arguably involve social rules and norms, are dependent on cultural influences, whereas the factors of mania, eros and agape, which arguably involve strong personal feelings, are relatively free of cultural influences (Neto et al., 2000; Rohmann, Führer & Bierhoff, 2016).

TIME TO REFLECT

Think of the different types of love identified by Hendrick and Hendrick (1995) and Lee (1973, 1976). We know there are gender differences, in that men tend to score higher on ludus and eros than women. Complex cultural influences are also important. Can you think of any explanations why these differences might exist? What might an evolutionary social psychologist infer from these gender differences?

Photo by Saad on Unsplash

FIGURE 7.9 Arranged marriages Research suggests that while 'love' marriages start off happier than arranged marriages, the love begins to decline after a few years. On the other hand, the love experienced in arranged marriages increases.

Romantic love and culture

As is the case for attraction, some aspects of love are fairly universal. For example, it seems that most cultures have a conception of passionate or romantic love, as indicated by behaviours such as flirting and feelings such as physiological arousal, and the idea that love is a condition for marriage (Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992). However, cultures also differ on this dimension, as can be seen in the example of arranged marriages (see Figure 7.9). In such cases, love is not viewed as a precondition for marriage. Instead, love is seen as something that grows once people are married (Dion & Dion, 1993). A study by Gupta and Singh (1982) demonstrates the difference in

reported love over time between 'love' marriages and arranged marriages in an Indian sample. The researchers asked 50 couples to complete Rubin's (1970) love scale, where they were asked to answer questions about their partner such as 'I would do anything for——' (see earlier) and found that respondents who married for love reported decreased love over the years. On the other hand, respondents from arranged marriages reported increased love (Figure 7.10) (see also Raina & Maity, 2018).

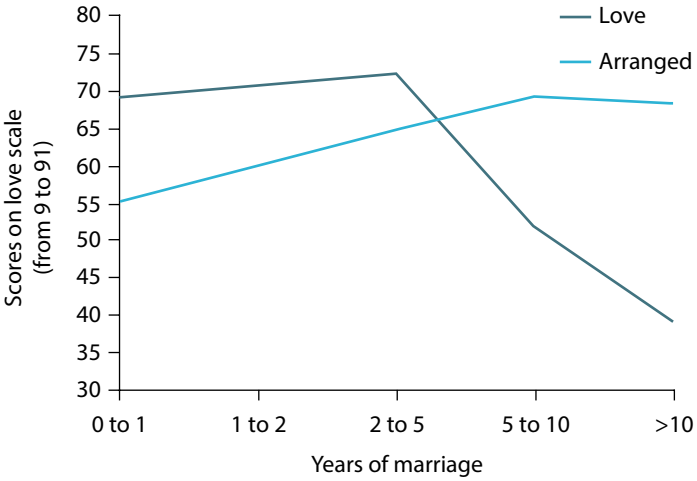


FIGURE 7.10 Reported love over time in arranged and 'love' marriages 'Love' marriages decreased in reported love over the years of marriage. While beginning at a lower level of love, arranged marriages increased in reported love over the years of marriage.

Source: Data from Gupta and Singh (1982)

Divorce rates differ across countries. For example, in 2017, the top five divorce rates were in Luxemboug (87 per cent), Spain (65 per cent), France (55 per cent), Russia (51 per cent) and the USA (46 per cent). The five lowest were in India (1 per cent), Chile (3 per cent), Colombia (9 per cent), Mexico (15 per cent) and Kenya (15 per cent); (data retrieved from unifiedlawyers.com.au). Some theorists argue that this is due to cultural differences in the focus on personal feelings versus the focus on the more practical aspects of a relationship. It may also relate to individualist versus collectivist perspectives on obligations and duties. Specifically, US samples have been shown to focus on the former, while Asian cultures are generally more focused on the latter (Dion & Dion, 1988; Sprecher & Toro-Morn, 2002) and are less individualistic (Dion & Dion, 1991), which may also be a factor in increasing Western divorce rates.

Love and gender

There is some evidence to suggest that women and men experience passionate love differently. Perhaps surprisingly, men tend to fall in love more quickly than women (Dion & Dion, 1985). Men are also less likely to initiate breakups. On the other hand, women are more likely to focus on emotional rather than physical intimacy and are typically more emotionally invested in a relationship than men (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1995). As we mentioned earlier, women and men also rate the experience of love quite differently, as evidenced by their different love styles. As we saw earlier in the Critical Focus box, it seems that women and men even approach the basics of mate selection quite differently. According to popular thinking, and some popular writers, men are from Mars and women are from Venus (Gray, 1992), but evidence suggests that this is overexaggerated and cultural differences in perceptions of romantic love are more powerful than gender differences within cultures (Sprecher & Toro-Morn, 2002).

ATTACHMENT AND BONDING

As we discussed earlier, the need for affiliation is a fundamental human requirement for psychological wellbeing. Studies of social deprivation in infants provide some indication of the consequences of an unfulfilled need for affiliation. In a series of controversial studies in the 1950s and 60s, Harlow separated rhesus monkeys from their mothers and placed them in isolation chambers for a period of up to 24 months. Social isolation caused the monkeys both psychological and physiological stress, suggesting that early

maternal contact is vital to wellbeing (Harlow, 1958; Harlow & Harlow, 1965). Similar effects occur in humans. For example, Bowlby (1969) observed the behaviours of infants and their mothers. When separated, infants would seek to be reunited with their mothers and would use a variety of behaviours (crying, smiling) to reunite with the mother, or other behaviours (e.g., clinging) to stay close to her. Bowlby argued that these **attachment behaviours** are all indicators of the fundamental need to affiliate. Deprived of affiliation with others, children often become fearful, withdrawn and silent (Bowlby, 1980). Bowlby argued that intimate attachment to others is a necessary means of drawing strength and enjoyment from life. Furthermore, Bowlby argued that attachment behaviours are not confined to child-carer interactions, but continue throughout the life span in different types of relationships. In other words, the nature of attachment in babies and children is similar to the attachments people display in later life with friends, family members and in romantic relationships.

Attachment behaviours The behaviours an infant will exhibit to stay close to, or be reunited with, a primary carer.

Theorists have argued that people's relationship experiences later in life are determined by their experiences with parents or carers during childhood and infancy (e.g., Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Shaver & Hazan, 1993). That is, good and stable adult relationships are likely to be a consequence of early experiences, specifically with carers (Berscheid, 1994). There is some evidence that this is the case, but as relationship duration increases, this link appears to become weaker (Hadden, Smith & Webster, 2014). Relationships between children and carers are important because these typically form the first contact with another person. Babies come into the world and immediately begin interacting with others. Of course, there are differences in the ways that carers interact with their children and differences in infants' own preferences for interaction.

These differences appear to have important implications for relationships with others – family relationships, friendships and romantic relationships alike – later in life. This research focuses on **attachment styles** (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1988). People can be classified as exhibiting one of three main attachment styles in their relationships.

Attachment styles Expectations that people develop about their relationships, based on relationships with carers as infants and children.

To examine attachment styles, Mary Ainsworth (1973, 1979) set up a paradigm known as the **strange situation**. In the strange situation, a child is observed playing for 20 minutes while their carer leaves and re-enters the room. The rationale is that the situation varies in the extent to which it is stressful to the child and the child's different ways of coping can be observed and used as an index of their attachment to their carers. The child experiences the following events:

Strange situation Procedure designed to observe attachment relationships between carer and child.

1. The carer and infant enter the room.
2. The carer and infant are alone. The carer does not participate but the infant explores the room.
3. The stranger enters, talks to the carer, and then approaches the infant. The carer leaves inconspicuously.
4. The carer and child are now separated. The stranger's behaviour is geared to that of the infant.
5. The carer re-enters the room. S/he greets and comforts the infant, then leaves again.
6. The carer and child are therefore separated again. This time, the infant is left alone.
7. The separation episode continues. The stranger enters and gears their behaviour to that of the infant.
8. The carer re-enters the room. S/he greets and picks up the infant. The stranger leaves inconspicuously.

Four aspects of the child's behaviour are observed:

1. The amount of exploration (e.g., playing with new toys) throughout the situation.
2. The child's reactions to the departure of their carer.
3. The stranger anxiety (when the baby is alone with the stranger).
4. The child's reunion behaviour with their carer.

Using this procedure, results reveal that somewhere between 55 and 70 per cent of infants (and adults) display a **secure attachment style** (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Jones & Cunningham, 1996), although this appears to be decreasing (see Konrath, Chopik, Hsing & O'Brien, 2014). Beginning in infancy, when placed in the strange situation, securely attached infants play with their carer and are happy to explore the environment. When the carer leaves, the child becomes distressed and is comforted when the carer returns. After the carer returns, the child begins to explore and play again (Ainsworth, 1973, 1979). This secure attachment style is characterized by trust, high self-esteem and a secure feeling of being loved (see Table 7.2). Theorists argue that this attachment style is the basis of secure adult relationships, characterized by commitment and trust. Specifically, during difficult times such as separation or conflict, the underlying trust helps maintain the relationship (Miller & Rempel, 2004). Research also demonstrates that secure attachment leads to satisfying and enduring relationships (Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990).

Secure attachment style Attachment style distinguished by trust, less concern about being left alone and a secure feeling of being worthy and liked.

TABLE 7.2 Attachment styles

Style of adult relationship	Approximate percentage of people	Background and characteristics
Secure	56	Carer was responsive and positive. People feel well liked and are able to trust others in close relationships
Avoidant	25	Carer was aloof and distant. People have difficulty forming intimate relationships for fear of rejection
Anxious/ambivalent	19	Carer was inconsistent and overbearing. People are anxious and concerned that feelings are not reciprocated

Source: Data from Hazan and Shaver (1987)

Infants displaying an **avoidant attachment style** show little distress when being separated from a carer and also have little reaction to the carer returning to the room after separation. People exhibiting an avoidant attachment style in adulthood tend to avoid close relationships altogether or become involved in unhappy relationships. They are also less likely to be invested in relationships and are more likely to leave them. They are also likely to have more one night stands and sexual relationships without love (Tidwell, Reis & Shaver, 1996). In general, it appears that avoidant individuals have a less positive perception of others than of themselves.

Avoidant attachment style Attachment style distinguished by low trust and avoidance of relationships.

Finally, in the strange situation, an **anxious/ambivalent** infant will cling closely to the carer. When they leave the room and return, the infant may be indifferent or even hostile towards the carer. In adulthood, this attachment style is characterized by possessiveness, jealousy and a lack

Anxious/ambivalent attachment style Attachment style distinguished by anxiety and concern that feelings are not reciprocated.

EXPLORING FURTHER

You may wish to complete this adult attachment scale for yourself. AV stands for items that relate to avoidant attachment style, S for secure, and AX for anxious. There are six items for each. Once you have finished, tally up your scores for the three different attachment styles. Are you more secure than avoidant? More anxious than secure? Knowing what you know about attachment styles and relationships, what might your scores mean for your own relationships?

	Not at all						Very
I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others (AV)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
People are never there when you need them (AV)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am comfortable depending on others (S)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I know that others will be there when I need them (S)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I find it difficult to trust others completely (AV)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am not sure that I can always depend on others to be there when I need them (AX)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I do not often worry about being abandoned (S)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I often worry that my partner does not really love me (AX)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I find others are reluctant to get as close as I would like (AX)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me (AX)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I want to merge completely with another person (AX)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My desire to merge sometimes scares people away (AX)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I find it relatively easy to get close to others (S)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I do not often worry about someone getting close to me (S)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others (AV)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am nervous when anyone gets too close (AV)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am comfortable having others depend on me (S)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being (AV)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Note: Collins and Read's (1990) adult attachment scale was designed to measure three components of attachment that underlie attachment styles. These are known as 'comfort with closeness', 'comfort with dependency', and 'anxiety about being abandoned or rejected'. The scale was not designed to capture secure, avoidant and anxious/ambivalent attachment styles. Nonetheless, since each item was taken from descriptions of these attachment styles as labelled here, the average of your responses will give an informative estimate of your secure, avoidant and anxious/ambivalent tendencies.

Source: Collins (1996); Collins and Read (1990). Copyright © 1990 by the American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

of trust. Anxious/ambivalent adults tend to become emotional and angry in conflicts (Cassidy, 2000; Feeney & Noller, 1990). In general, such people seek close relationships but are fearful they will eventually be rejected; that is, they have a positive perception of others but a rather negative view of themselves.

There is some additional research to support the argument that infant-carer attachments are associated with the nature of attachments in adult relationships. For example, Rholes, Simpson and Blakel (1995) studied the relationship between a mother's feelings towards her children and her own attachment style in her adult relationships. It was found that mothers who were avoidant in their close adult relationships were less close to their children than securely attached mothers. Further, studies show that secure individuals are often paired with other secure people (Feeney, 1994), demonstrating that attachment styles during childhood do seem to have an influence on later relationships. Also, attachment seems to be a key feature of relationships across the life span. In particular, relationship quality is often determined by adult attachment style, with securely attached adults having better quality relationships and enjoyment of affection, compared to avoidant adults who have difficulty forming relationships, and anxious adults who fall in love easily but generally feel unhappy (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; but see Hadden et al., 2014 for evidence that this also depends on relationship duration). It is important to note that attachment levels can change (Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994), and the proportion of the different attachment styles in the population appears to be changing (Konrath et al., 2014), but that a secure attachment style appears in general to provide the best hopes for relationship success. Hazan, Gur-Yaish and Campa (2004) argued that, in general, early attachment experiences shape the ways in which people think about relationships. Sensitive, trustworthy carers encourage a sense of trust in their offspring and this example helps mould the way people view their own relationships with others later in life.

Other family relationships

So far, we have focused on how early experiences with a primary carer can influence romantic relationships later in life. In studies, this primary carer is typically the mother. However, some work suggests that interactions with other family members (e.g., fathers and

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grandparents) are also important in shaping future relationships (Lin & Harwood, 2003) and can compensate for shortcomings in the relationship with the primary carer (Clark, Kochanska & Ready, 2000).

Relationships with siblings are also important (Dunn & McGuire, 1992). For example, some research suggests that having siblings makes children more liked by their peers in school, presumably because interacting with other children helps children understand the rules of social interaction (Kitzmann, Cohen & Lockwood, 2002). On the whole, siblings tend to get along well, especially if the parents also get along (McGuire, McHale & Updegraff, 1996). Siblings who relate well to each other, especially those who share an even closer bond such as identical twins, are more likely to maintain a strong relationship through adolescence and into adulthood. However, if the relationship with the sibling is not so good, this may have consequences in later life. People judge their relationships with others compared to their sibling relationships, and the positive or negative feelings associated with a sibling relationship are likely to influence interactions with others. For example, studies have shown that school bullies are more likely to have had a negative relationship with their parents (Innamorarti et al., 2018), but also a sibling or siblings (Bowers, Smith & Binney, 1994).

MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships often go through rough patches and there are many factors that can influence relationship satisfaction. For example, many relationships experience conflict and married couples report an average of two to three arguments per month (McGonagle, Kessler & Schilling, 1992). How people handle conflict is a strong predictor of relationship satisfaction. Jealousy is a common problem in relationships because people are predisposed to be wary of any threats (e.g., Parrott & Smith, 1993). How do people keep their relationships strong in the face of trouble? How do people stay satisfied with their relationships? Research suggests that several factors are important. Perhaps the most important is commitment.

Commitment The wish or intention of a person to stay in a relationship.

Commitment is defined as a person's wish or intention to stay in a relationship. A person's level of commitment to a relationship is primarily dependent on their attraction to the partner and the perceived negative consequences of exiting the relationship (Johnson, 1991). More specifically, Adams and Jones (1997) noted that there are three factors that motivate people to stay in a relationship. First, a person's dedication to the partner is important. If they have a positive attraction to their partner and the relationship, they are more likely to be committed. Second, many factors make it costly to exit a relationship. For example, there may not be many attractive alternatives available. Third, the longer a relationship continues, the more likely people are to share friends, money and property – ties that are difficult to break (Kurdek, 1998). According to Rusbult's (1983) investment model of commitment (Figure 7.11), people's commitment to a relationship is not only predicted by the level of investment they feel they have put into the relationship, but also what they feel they would lose if they left the relationship.

However, a person's values are also important. Specifically, the extent to which people have a moral commitment to the relationship influences their motivation to maintain the relationship (Adams & Jones, 1997). For example, religious values may encourage people not to leave a partner, or people may simply feel an obligation to keep a promise, especially in the case of marriage where a legal contract has been made.

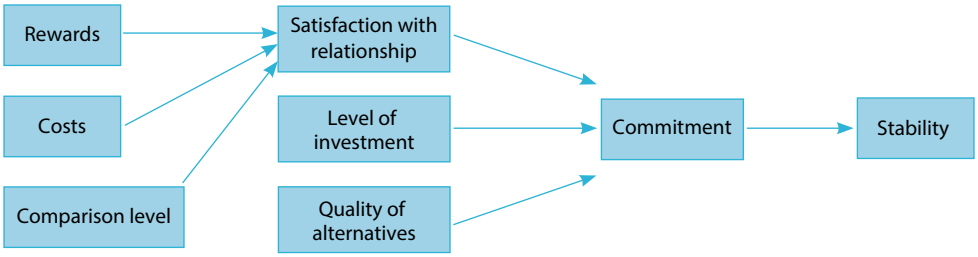

FIGURE 7.11 Rusbult's investment model of commitment People's commitment to a relationship and the ultimate stability of the relationship is determined by perceived costs, rewards and comparison level for alternatives.

Source: Rusbult (1983). Copyright © 1983 by the American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission.

The higher the commitment, the more likely a couple will stay together (Adams & Jones, 1997). Commitment also predicts marital satisfaction and trust (Kurdek, 2000; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster & Agnew, 1999). In turn, trust also predicts relationship success. As we mentioned earlier, an insecure attachment style is associated with a lack of trust.

Other factors help maintain relationships. For example, forgiving a partner's transgressions can keep a potentially difficult relationship going (McCullough, Worthington & Rachal, 1997) and provides an alternative to breaking up. Also, some research suggests that people use cognitive strategies to maintain relationships. Specifically, when a relationship is less ideal, people can lower their expectations to more closely match the benefits they gain from their partner (Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas, 2000). People can also think more about the positive aspects of their partner and less about their faults (Murray & Holmes, 1999). Another alternative is to directly act upon the partner to make them a closer match to the ideal. Specifically, Overall, Fletcher and Simpson (2006) argued that people can engage in **partner regulation**, where they actively attempt to change the partner to be closer to what they would like. For example, if a partner is not living up to one's expectations in terms of their earnings, one way might be to suggest that they go back to university and train to get a better job. Overall, Fletcher, Simpson and Sibley (2009) examined the success of different communication strategies that partners used when trying to produce changes in each other. Partners were videoed while trying to bring about changes in the partner and were later asked about the success of their attempts, both immediately and at three-month intervals in the following year. Results revealed that direct strategies (positive and negative) were not perceived as immediately successful but predicted increased change over the following 12 months. On the other hand, indirect strategies (especially those that were positive) were immediately rated as successful but did not predict later change. In summary, people can attempt to mould their partner to be what they want them to be and some communication strategies can be more effective than others (see also Baker & McNulty, 2015; Jayamaha & Overall, 2015; Russell, Baker, McNulty & Overall, 2018).

Partner regulation Actively attempting to change one's partner to make them closer to one's ideal.

TIME TO REFLECT

Knowing what you know about similarity, attraction and relationship success, what do you think might be the advantages and pitfalls of trying to 'mould' a relationship partner to make them who you want them to be?

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Same-sex relationships: 'the love that dare not speak its name'

You may be wondering what social psychologists have to say about same-sex relationships. Do they differ from heterosexual relationships in any way? To date, there is little research concerning how gay and lesbian relationships form, are maintained and how they break up. Of course, this has much to do with the social stigma that has historically been associated with homosexuality. After all, until relatively recently in human history, homosexuality was illegal. But as society is changing and same-sex marriages are now recognized and performed in many countries, more researchers are studying same-sex relationships. For example, Peplau and Fingerhut (2007) reviewed the empirical work on same-sex couples in the USA. They found many similarities between same-sex and heterosexual relationships, but also some differences. What is similar?

- Both value affection, dependability, shared interests and similarity of religious beliefs.
- Relationship satisfaction is largely driven by similarity in backgrounds, attitudes and values.
- For men, physical attractiveness is of key importance, whereas women place more emphasis on personality.
- Relationships commonly form through proximity and familiarity (e.g., knowing friends or being in the same neighbourhood).

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- The Internet is a key tool for establishing new relationships.
- High emphasis on equity within the relationship.
- Commitment is a strong predictor of relationship success.

What is different?

- Lesbian relationships are more likely to originate from pre-existing friendships.
- Gay and lesbian couples are more likely to stay friends after relationship breakup.
- Division of labour within the household is more equitable.
- Controlling for demographic variables, same-sex relationships are more likely to break up.

Questions

1. One common perception of same-sex relationships is that they are less happy and more dysfunctional than heterosexual relationships. What do you think? As an exercise, find out what research suggests about this issue.
2. One key difference between same-sex and heterosexual relationships is the presence of children (although this, too, is changing). What impact might the lack of children have on relationships?
3. To what extent do you think that prejudice and discrimination put stress on same-sex relationships?

WHEN RELATIONSHIPS END

Not all relationships stand the test of time, and as we saw earlier in the chapter, divorce rates in some countries are very high. The consequences of relationship breakdown can be alarming, even for people who are not part of the relationship. For example, Tucker et al. (1997) found that adults who had experienced their parents breaking up were more likely to be involved in marital breakups themselves. In Figure 7.12, you will see the reasons people cite on their divorce papers. Most people report that 'falling out of love' is the key reason for

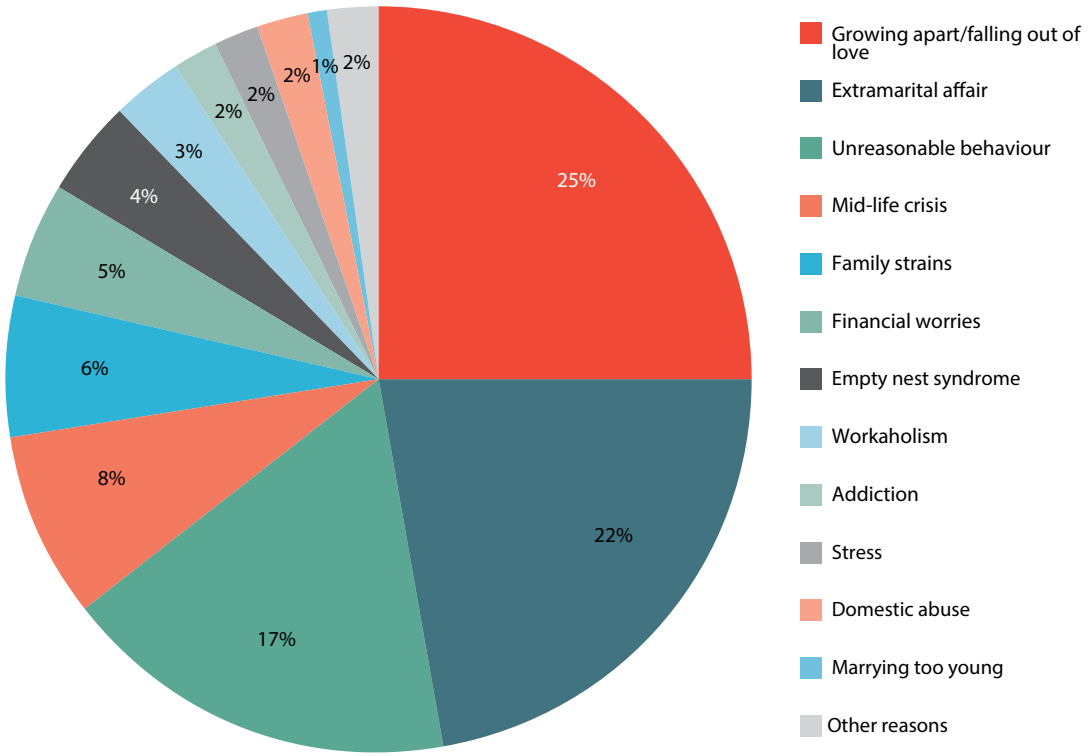

FIGURE 7.12 Reasons for divorce in the UK in 2016

Source: Data from Grant Thornton (2016)

the breakup. How do things go so wrong that people choose to end their relationships? In this section, we discuss the process of relationship breakdown, again with a specific focus on romantic relationships.

Factors influencing relationship breakdown

People who enter into relationships with the view that the relationship should be long-lasting tend to have more satisfying and enduring relationships (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). Further, feelings of obligation to a relationship, as well as a lack of consideration of alternatives, can keep a relationship together (Adams & Jones, 1997). This may also be influenced by culture, as norms of obligation and commitment differ across individualist and collectivist societies. As we saw earlier, divorce rates differ significantly across countries and there seems to be a general trend for high divorce rates within individualist cultures and lower rates in collectivist cultures (Triandis, 1994). Perhaps individualists tend to expect relationships to provide more fulfillment for the self, including passion, which exists to a lesser extent in collectivist cultures where the focus is more on the concerns of others (Dion & Dion, 1993).

Relationships also tend to last longer if the individuals share similar backgrounds and experiences. For example, couples of a similar education level, age and religious commitment are more likely to stay together (Fergusson, Horwood & Shannon, 1984). If factors such as these are absent, relationships have a lower likelihood of success. Another important factor seems to be the extent to which partners are similar in terms of their love attitudes, disclosure, investment, commitment and relationship satisfaction (Hendrick, Hendrick & Adler, 1988). This is not to say that relationships are doomed if people do not have these specific factors in

common. However, from other research discussed in this chapter, we know that similarity and common experiences are important. They are important for attraction in the first place, and they are also important for relationship survival.

Felmlee, Sprecher and Bassin (1990) demonstrated a range of factors associated with relationship breakdown, such as comparison level for alternatives, the amount of time spent together, dissimilarity in race, support from partners' social network, and duration of the relationship. Again, similarity in many ways is important to relationship survival. However, factors related to social exchange can also influence people's decision to terminate or remain within a relationship. This was also demonstrated in a study by Rusbult (1983), who showed that relationship satisfaction and the level of investment in a relationship significantly predicted how committed a person felt to their relationship and the decision to break up (see Figure 7.13). You will notice that comparison level for alternatives was the strongest factor in the decision to break up, whereas both satisfaction and investment predicted relationship commitment.

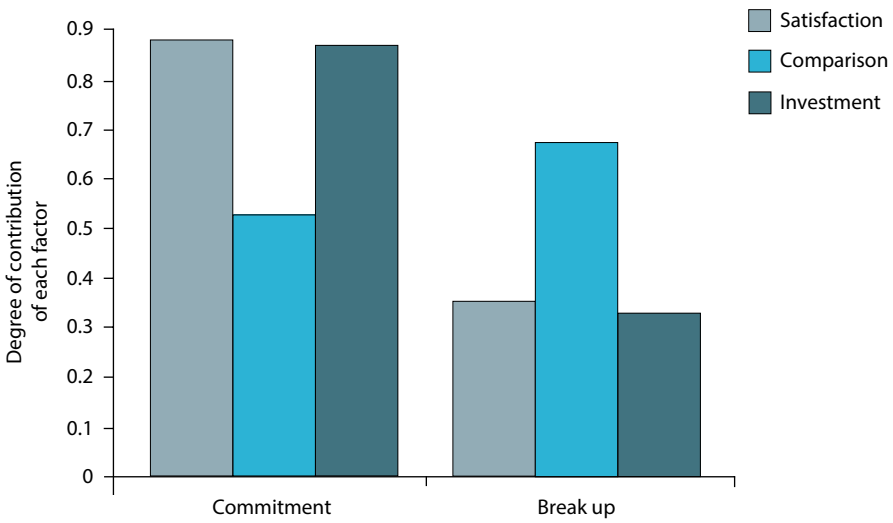

FIGURE 7.13 Factors determining commitment and breakup The same three factors, relationship satisfaction, comparison for alternatives and level of investment, predict both relationship commitment and the decision to end relationships.

Source: Data from Rusbult (1983)

In general, research suggests that people are likely to feel that a relationship is coming to an end if there is a lack of commitment to the relationship (Levinger, 1980). Also, people may begin to consider alternative partners (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001), make comparisons with other more successful relationships (Morry, Chee, Penniston & Sucharyna, 2018) and expect that the relationship is going to fail.

How do people end relationships?

Once a decision has been made that a relationship is ending, people can choose to react in several different ways. For example, Rusbult and Zembrodt (1983) argued that people can react actively or passively to the crisis. In other words, they can either work at improving the relationship and remain loyal to their partner (constructive) or choose to end it (destructive). Alternatively, they can wait for the relationship to improve (constructive) or simply ignore the situation and hope that things will get better (destructive) (see also the additional work of Rusbult, Johnson & Morrow, 1986; Rusbult, Morrow & Johnson, 1987; Rusbult et al., 1998; Rusbult, Olsen, Davis & Hannon, 2001).

If a person chooses to actively detach from the relationship, this is not an easy process. Severing ties with a close other takes time, and even removing emotional factors from the equation, there are many practical factors to consider, such as children, property and other binding factors. Some theorists (e.g., Baxter, 1984; Duck, 1998; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Rollie & Duck, 2006), argue that the process of detachment from a long-term relationship follows a series of stages, including the following types of events:

- An individual thinks about the problems in the relationship. They hope to repair the relationship and often seek advice from others about how to do so. The focus is largely on the partner's behaviour and an evaluation of their 'performance' in the relationship. The pros and cons of staying in the relationship are considered.
- The two parties discuss their differences and potentially argue about who is responsible for the differences. They negotiate with each other and consider breaking up or reconciliation. At this stage, it is possible for the partners to talk through their problems and repair the relationship. If only one person wishes to end the relationship, they can differ in their strategy (compassionate vs. noncompassionate) to do so (Sprecher, Zimmerman & Abrahams, 2010; see also Fehr & Sprecher, 2009).
- If the two parties are not able to solve their problems, they acknowledge that the relationship is coming to an end. Each party seeks social support and validation of their position. Each party tries to save 'face' to others. The two parties separate and perform the functional aspects of the breakup including dividing property and agreeing custody arrangements. Social support is again important, as well as presenting a positive 'face' to others. The two parties attempt to 'get over' each other, return to normal life and gain a renewed sense of self, ready for new relationships.

In general, the process of relationship breakup is fraught and, depending on the length of the relationship and the level of intimacy involved, can cause a great deal of pain and sadness, distress and trouble with coping (Fine & Harvey, 2006; Orbuch, 1992; Simpson, 1987; Sprecher & Fehr, 1998; Vangelisti & Perlman, 2006). Feelings of guilt can be powerful for people who leave relationships (Baumeister & Wotman, 1992). However, for many people, the benefits of leaving a relationship outweigh the costs and so divorce rates remain high. If a relationship is characterized by disagreement, criticism and conflict, then people are unhappy and, perhaps unsurprisingly, they are also more likely to break up (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Successful relationships are less likely to be characterized by these types of destructive behaviours within relationships (Notarius & Markman, 1993; Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994). This is not to say that successful couples do not fight – they do – but there is evidence to suggest that successful couples are able to reconcile their differences and find a balance between conflict and affection (Gottman, 1998).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Sprecher et al. (2010) demonstrated that people differ in their choice of strategy to end romantic relationships. Some strategies are compassionate (e.g., honestly conveying one's wishes to a partner, finding time to talk face to face) and some are less so (e.g., asking a third party to break the news, breaking up via text or email). Of course, this depends on the length of the relationship and various other factors, but take some time to reflect on the different consequences of using these diverse strategies to end relationships. Do you think women and men might choose different strategies? Find a copy of Sprecher et al.'s paper to find out more.

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Student samples in relationships research

Many studies of relationship breakup, as well as other aspects of close relationships, have been conducted with university students as participants. This is a practical choice for the most part – students in many institutions are required to participate in research to earn credit for their course, and this presents an easy source of participants for researchers.

In many cases of social psychological research, student samples are appropriate. For example, there is no reason to believe that basic social cognitive processes like many of those we discussed in Chapter 3 would vary between people of different ages or levels of education. However, the choice of sample may be important in other aspects of social psychology. In the questions below, we would like you to consider the study of close relationships and whether (and when) student participation is appropriate.

As a researcher, it is important to consider the research question being asked and the type of study being conducted. When reflecting on the suitability of a sample, and especially when criticizing a study or area of research based on choice of sample, it is important to go beyond the criticism that 'this sample was not representative of society'. It is important to be clear about why it is not representative, how the sample may differ systematically from the population as a whole, and specifically, how results may have been affected.

Questions

1. Do you think that relying on student samples to study relationship phenomena is a problem?
2. Can you find any evidence that undergraduates' and non-students' relationships are different? If so, in what ways are they different?
3. How might any differences influence the study of relationships?
4. On balance, are students a suitable sample to study relationships? Why/why not? This final question is something you can ask in most chapters of this textbook and will help you understand more about sampling in social psychology.

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

The Student Project on page 664 by Nina Waddell from The University of Auckland is relevant to the issues discussed in this chapter. Nina studied how sexism affects the life satisfaction that people derive from being in an intimate relationship. Her quantitative research using data from a large survey is also relevant to our discussions about sexism and stereotypes in Chapters 4 and 11.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have focused on the physical and psychological determinants of attraction and have outlined the major theories of attraction. We have outlined what social psychologists know about love and romantic relationships and their link to attachment processes in childhood. We have discussed how people maintain relationships and, finally, how people end relationships. You will now know that:

- The most important factor in determining judgements of attractiveness is a person's physical appearance.
- There is strong consensus both within and between cultures about what features are attractive.

- One key mechanism that determines attraction is called the matching phenomenon – people tend to be attracted to others who are about the same level of physical attractiveness as themselves. However, less attractive individuals can compensate by making themselves attractive in other areas.
- In addition to good looks, people are attracted to others who are familiar, or those who are close by. Proximity is effective because we tend to like things that are familiar to us. Repeated (positive) exposure to another person is likely to lead to more favourable evaluations. This is called the mere exposure effect.
- Attraction is also determined by psychological factors, key to which is the need to affiliate – the motive to seek and maintain interpersonal relationships with others.
- Attraction to others is also influenced by emotions.
- Attraction is also influenced by similarity of attitudes, interests and values. People who are similar in personality, interpersonal skills and communication style are also more likely to be attracted to one another.
- People from similar social backgrounds are more likely to be attracted to one another.
- A person's attraction to another person is also determined by reciprocity – does the other person like them too?
- Social exchange theory argues that the more social rewards a person offers, the more we will be attracted to that person. People weigh up the rewards and costs to determine whether to enter into a relationship. They also consider their relationship alternatives.
- Equity theory proposes that people are not simply after the most rewards and the least costs. They also need equity and fairness so that the cost-reward payoff is the same for both parties in the relationship.
- Other approaches propose that attraction is a result of direct reinforcement or reward.
- Passionate love is the type of love that involves intense feelings, uncontrollable thoughts and deep longing for another person. There are physiological 'symptoms' to passionate love.
- Companionate love involves deep, secure feelings that are not accompanied with the physiological arousal of passionate love.
- People's experiences of love and relationships in later life are determined by their attachment experiences with parents or carers in childhood and infancy.
- Maintenance of relationships is largely driven by the level of commitment – a person's wish or intention to stay in the relationship. The higher the commitment, the more likely a couple will stay together. Similarity and common experiences are also important.
- The process of ending a relationship is said to progress through a series of stages and is determined by a variety of factors, such as the length of the relationship and the level of intimacy involved.

In this chapter, we have focused on the close, intimate relationships that are formed between individuals. In Chapter 8, we turn our focus to the broader relationships and commitments that people make to their groups.

? REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. Outline the factors that influence attraction and discuss, with reference to social psychological research, the factors that influence the likelihood of a person entering a relationship with a more attractive individual.
2. Evaluate the research suggesting that physical proximity is a strong determinant of attraction. In your answer, consider the implications of new information and communication technology.

3. Outline social exchange theory and its major alternatives. Which theory best describes why people form relationships?
4. Describe the process of relationship dissolution. At each stage, discuss the factors that influence people's decision to stay with or end their relationships.

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Abusive relationships

We have spent little time on the 'dark side' of close relationships in this chapter. But relationships can go disastrously wrong. For most people, relationships are a source of love, support and strength, but for all too many, they are primarily a venue of danger, abuse and dominance. What does social psychology have to say about why relationships become abusive, and how the problem of abuse and violence within close relationships might be addressed? To think about these questions, it is necessary to read beyond just this chapter, and to tie together different strands of social psychology. In answering these questions, keep an eye out for material in other chapters.

1. What causes some people to be abusive in relationships? (Hint: check out the chapters on aggression, intergroup relations and justice.)
2. Why do so many people who find themselves being abused fail to leave the relationship?
3. Apart from physical or sexual violence, what other, more subtle forms might abuse within close relationships take?
4. Do you think that self-verification theory (Chapter 2) may play a role in intergenerational cycles of violence? Consider why people who were raised in the context of abusive relationships between parents may be more likely to find themselves abused in relationships as an adult.

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources including videos and self-test multiple choice questions to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

Baumeister, R.F. & Bratslavsky, E. (1999). Passion, intimacy, and time: Passionate love as a function of change in intimacy. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 3*, 49–67. Interesting review article discussing the differences between friendship and love.

Berscheid, E. & Reis, H.T. (1998). Attraction and close relationships. In D.T. Gilbert, S.T. Fiske & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (4th ed, vol. 2, pp. 193–281). New York: McGraw-Hill. Overview of the research on attraction and close relationships, discussing in more detail some of the topics covered in this chapter.

Duck, S. (2007). *Human relationships* (4th ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Introduction to the study and understanding of human relationships, with coverage of the research from social, personality and developmental psychology, as well as other disciplines such as family studies and sociology.

Fehr, B. (1996) *Friendship processes*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. A look at friendships from one of the leading researchers in the field.

Finkel, E.J., Simpson, J.A., & Eastwick, P.W. (2017). The psychology of close relationships: Fourteen core principles. *Annual Review of Psychology, 68*, 383–411. A review of the literature on close relationships that articulates broader themes and principles.

Fitness, J., Fletcher, G. & Overall, N. (2003). Interpersonal attraction and intimate relationships. In M.A. Hogg & J. Cooper (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of social psychology* (pp. 258–78). London: Sage. Discusses emotions in relationships and some of the evolutionary origins of attraction and relationships.

Hendrick, C.A. and Hendrick, S.S. (Eds.). (2000). *Close relationships: A sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. A varied view on close relationships research, with examples from current literature, research and practical applications.

PART

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10. Group behaviour 410

11. Intergroup relations 450

CHAPTER

8 THE SOCIAL GROUP

This chapter explains why groups are so important to people. We outline how and why groups form and what they mean to the individuals who belong to them. We also discuss how the norms or 'rules' of group behaviour develop, and the consequences of violating group norms. We outline some of the negative aspects of group membership, such as when groups break up, and the negative consequences for people who are left out of groups. By the end of this chapter, you will have an understanding of why groups are central to human existence.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- What is a group?
- Formation of groups
- Group structure
- The flexibility of social norms
- Fitting in to groups
- What do groups do for us?

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In 2015, Bruce Jenner, the former Olympic athlete and reality TV celebrity, became Caitlyn Jenner, declaring that she identified as a woman. With significant exceptions, online and media reaction to this decision was generally supportive. This is in keeping with greater public tolerance of transgenderism in many countries, and the understanding that a person can identify with a gender that is not determined by their biological sex at birth. Shortly afterwards, the prominent American civil rights activist Rachel Dolezal was 'outed' by her parents as an imposter. Although without biological Black heritage, she had nonetheless presented herself as a Black woman and was active in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The reaction to Rachel Dolezal's decision to identify herself as Black appeared to be much less sympathetic than to Caitlyn Jenner's decision to identify herself as a woman. Even her parents disapproved, claiming that her behaviour was 'embarrassing'. Rachel Dolezal, however, was defiant, claiming that rather than being a fraud, she genuinely identified as Black. And some commentators took her side, asking what makes it OK for people to claim to be women when biologically speaking, they are male, but not OK for people to claim to be Black when biologically speaking, they are not?

We will return to these questions later in this chapter. Whatever you think the answers might be, both cases highlight a number of issues that are at the heart of this chapter. First, our identities – or feelings of belonging to groups like gender and racial groups – are important to us. Second, our identities are also important to other people. Finally, it can be hard to maintain an identity if others do not recognize it. Indeed, identities can be complex, controversial and contested.

Groups are a central part of human existence. We are members of a wide variety of groups in almost every facet of life, from our daily work (e.g., project teams, research groups) to our social lives (e.g., peer groups, sports clubs) and our personal lives (e.g., the family unit). Our groups define who we are. We often refer to ourselves in terms of our group memberships, such as 'I am a woman', 'I am Chinese' or 'I am a member of the hockey club', so that when we think about ourselves, we think about the social groups that come together to make us who we are. But groups not only define who we are, they also influence how we live. The groups we belong to determine some of the most basic aspects of our lives, such as our attitudes and beliefs, our cultural practices and the language we use to talk to one another. Our groups can also determine where we live and who we know. Groups influence what we do in specific situations too. As we will see throughout Part 3, groups can influence our behaviour in a variety of ways. In general, it appears that groups have a strong power over us and we cannot function properly without them.

But what are groups, exactly, and why do people need them so much? In this chapter, we will explain why group membership is important to humans as social beings. We will examine how and why groups form, what groups mean to individuals' sense of their own identity and feelings of self-worth, how the norms or 'rules' of group behaviour develop, and what happens when people violate these rules. Finally, we will turn to the often distressing processes of group breakup or division, and how being left out of, or rejected from, groups can be painful, psychologically and physically.

WHAT IS A GROUP?

At face value, the question 'What is a group?' looks simple. After all, everyone can think of many examples of groups they belong to and can describe them very well. We think we know what groups are. However, it is difficult to define what a group is. Indeed, you may find that what you consider to be a group does not fit with a social psychological definition of a group (see Figure 8.1). For example, are students in a lecture theatre a group? Is a pair of jogging partners a group? Do all people who have blonde hair qualify as a group? Most social psychologists would

Aggregates
People who share some connection, but there is no psychological value to the connection.

say not. These examples would perhaps be better classified as **aggregates**, rather than groups, of people (Hamilton & Sherman, 1996). This is because they are not related, *psychologically,* in any particular way. They have things in common but there is nothing uniquely psychological that binds them together. Even so, it is often difficult to define what distinguishes such aggregates from groups themselves, and thus one clear definition of a group is difficult to find.

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FIGURE 8.1 Is this a group? Is a group of students in a lecture theatre a group? Most social psychologists would say not.

According to some researchers, group members must feel that they have a *common fate* (Lewin, 1948; Campbell, 1958; Rabbie & Horwitz, 1988; Rhodes & Chalik, 2013). Using this definition, Jewish people in Nazi Germany would be considered a group because they shared the same tragic fate of stigmatization and genocide – so long as they felt that their likely fate as individuals was shared by other group members (Brown, 2000). For other social psychologists, groups must have a defined and accepted social structure consisting of status hierarchies and social roles (e.g., Sherif & Sherif, 1969). A company with a CEO, managers and workers is a good example of this. However, for still other social psychologists, groups must interact face to face to qualify as groups (e.g., Bales, 1950). Johnson and Johnson (1987) provided a definition encompassing these features and produced an account of what many social psychologists would agree makes up a group:

> two or more individuals in face-to-face interaction, each aware of his or her membership in the group, each aware of the others who belong to the group, and each aware of their positive interdependence as they strive to achieve mutual goals. (p. 8)

According to this perspective, groups possess several key features. In particular, group members are said to be interdependent, follow norms or rules of behaviour, and typically join together to meet a common objective. This makes good sense for the small groups we are used to in everyday life, such as work teams, families and friendship groups. However, the utility of this kind of definition is significantly compromised when we consider *large* groups. We mentioned the example of Jewish people in Nazi Germany as a group, but using the definition above they would not qualify as a group. For a start, they do not all interact face to face. Many large groups such as gender, religious, social class and ethnic groups do not interact face to face. Nor do they necessarily have a joint need or goal. But are they still groups? Do people need these features to feel part of a group?

Many social psychologists argue that they do not. Indeed, as we will see in Chapters 9–12, larger group memberships can influence people's behaviours as much, if not more than the smallest,

most powerful, face-to-face group. People do not even need to be in the presence of other members of the group to be influenced by it – the group still strongly defines who the person is, how they live, who they associate with and what they do.

This issue has led some theorists to propose a more general definition that can include larger groups. According to Turner (1982), a group exists when 'two or more individuals ... perceive themselves to be members of the same social category' (p. 15). The key to this definition, then, is the extent to which people *identify* with groups. This concept is at the heart of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), to which we shall return later in this chapter (also see Chapter 11). The utility of this definition lies in its inclusiveness. Indeed, it is difficult to think of a group whose members, at least at some point in time, have not classified themselves as belonging to the group. Adding slightly to this definition, we draw on Turner's argument that groups perceive themselves as 'us' compared to 'them'. In seeing themselves as a group, people naturally compare themselves to groups they are not a part of. Thus, a **group** can be defined as two or more people who define themselves as a group (having a sense of 'us'), which is perceived as distinct from other groups (i.e., 'them'). This is the definition we use in the remainder of this chapter and beyond. You will also notice that we use the terms **ingroup** and **outgroup** throughout the book. Here, we are using the social psychological convention to differentiate between and name groups we are members of (ingroups) and groups to which we do not belong (outgroups).

Group Two or more people who define themselves as a group (having a sense of 'us'), which is perceived as distinct from other groups (i.e., 'them').

Ingroup Term used to describe groups we belong to.

Outgroup Term used to describe groups we do not belong to.

Nevertheless, the definition of groups remains controversial. Brown (2000) argued that the inclusiveness of the kind of definition we have adopted is also its main problem. Specifically, Brown argued that social psychologists would have little interest in people who secretly decide to define themselves as a group when the group's existence remains hidden to everyone else. He argued that an important feature of groups is that others who are not members still *recognize* them as groups. Certainly, most social groups are recognized by at least one other person, and it is difficult to imagine how stereotypes, prejudice, or conflict and cooperation between groups could arise unless groups recognize each other's existence. Therefore, Brown (2000) extended the definition of groups, stating that a group 'exists when two or more people define themselves as members of it and when its existence is recognized by at least one other' (p. 3). However, secret groups do exist, and in the initial phases of their existence may be unknown to others. Examples that come to mind are the groups that form to plan leadership coups and assassinations such as the (failed) attempt on Adolf Hitler's life in the final stages of the Second World War. Facebook and other social networks also allow the formation of 'secret groups' known only to their members. These secret groups seem to feature many of the same dynamics as other groups on social networks, for good (e.g., helping hospice carers support each other in the stress of their jobs, as investigated by Oliver et al., 2015, and helping smokers kick the habit, as shown by Ramo, Thrul, Chavez, Delucchi & Prochaska , 2015), and ill (e.g., providing a venue for young people to encourage each other to commit suicide, as investigated by Wong, Wong & Li, 2017).

Thus, we suggest that while the vast majority of groups are known to others, and that this knowledge is necessary for many of the interesting and important phenomena discussed in Part 3 of this textbook, we do not feel that this is a necessary component of the definition of groups. Whether or not a group is known to others, whether it shares a sense of common fate, and so on, are probably best thought of as characteristics that define different types of group.

TIME TO REFLECT

Have you ever belonged to a 'secret group' of at least you and one other person that no one else knew about? Or did you eventually discover the existence of such a 'secret group'? What was the nature of the group, and its purpose? Why was it secret and how did that affect the people who belonged to it?

Types of group

Groups are so diverse that we need ways of describing how they differ, as well as a core definition that can encompass groups of all types. Among many other dimensions, researchers have differentiated between groups that are big or small, structured or unstructured, specific and general, and physically close or scattered (Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi & Ethier, 1995). For example, it is easy to differentiate between groups that are big (e.g., religious groups) and small (e.g., families). Although such groups may share features in common – for example, a family group may share the same religion – they are easily distinguishable because of their sheer size. In a similar way, an online group of people losing weight or pursuing exercise goals can be distinguished from weight loss or fitness groups that meet every week on the basis of physical proximity.

Entitativity The feature of a group that makes it appear a distinct unit that is bound together.

Groups are also distinguished in terms of their **entitativity** – the degree to which they are perceived as distinct units that are bound together in some way (Campbell, 1958; Castano, Yzerbyt, Paladino & Sacchi, 2002; Gaertner & Schopler, 1998; Hamilton & Sherman, 1996; Hamilton, Sherman & Lickel, 1998). Perceiving a group as entitative means perceiving it as homogeneous, with a clear structure, purpose or boundaries, whereas groups that are less entitative tend to be more heterogeneous and unstructured. Lickel et al. (2000) measured the entitativity of many groups simply by asking participants how much, on a 10-point scale, each one 'qualifies as a group' (later studies, e.g., Castano et al., 2002, developed more sophisticated measures of entitativity). They found that entitativity is highest for **intimacy groups**, such as family groups, and lower for **task groups**, such as those brought together temporarily to achieve a particular goal. Lickel et al. (2002) also found that groups are less entitative if they are simply determined by social category memberships, such as religion, or if they are transitory, such as a group of people waiting for a train. Importantly, people identified themselves with groups and saw them important to the extent that they saw them as entitative.

Intimacy groups Groups that are closely tied together (e.g., family groups).

Task groups Groups that come together temporarily to achieve a specific goal.

There are other ways to distinguish groups. For example, some social psychologists separate groups into those based on groupings of similarity between members, and those based on social interactions between members (e.g., Arrow, McGrath & Berdahl, 2000; McGrath, Arrow & Berdahl, 2000). Along similar lines, other researchers categorize groups as either **common bond groups**, which depend on attachment among group members, or **common identity groups**, which depend on members' direct attachment to the group itself (Postmes, Spears, Lee & Novak, 2005; Prentice, Miller & Lightdale, 1994; Ren, Kraut & Kiesler, 2007; Sassenberg, 2002). In a study of British undergraduate students, Easterbrook and Vignoles (2013) found that different types of groups may contribute to a sense of belonging – a much-prized feeling that is often characterized as a fundamental human need – in different ways. When people think of their groups as interpersonal networks (rather like common bond groups), their sense of belonging arises from perceptions that they have good quality relations with other members. On the other hand, when people think of their groups as social categories (rather like common identity groups), belonging stems from perceptions that they are similar to other group members.

Common bond group Groups in which the members have close personal bonds within the group.

Common identity group Groups in which the members have close personal ties to the group itself.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Make a list of ten groups you currently belong to (e.g., family, sports, religious, national). Which are the most entitative? Which influence you the most? Can they be classified as one of the types of group we have discussed (e.g., intimacy group, common identity group)? Now, make a list of ten groups you do not belong to. Which of these are the most entitative and which of them influence you?

TIME TO REFLECT

There are many ways to distinguish between groups. Make a list of some of these for yourself. In real life, what dimensions do you think people might focus on the most? In other words, what makes different groups really different from each other?

FORMATION OF GROUPS

You will be able to think of many different kinds of groups that make up who you are. Obviously, many of your group memberships are chosen for you by birth. However, one common feature of many groups is that you can *choose* to join them. Likewise, you can choose to leave them. For example, if you do not like your hockey club or project group, you are more often than not free to leave. So, groups can be flexible, dynamic structures where people come and go. The movements of others and the makeup of the group at any given time can influence the nature of the group. Likewise, the group can influence its members, as we will see throughout Part 3. However, it is surprising that this aspect of groups is given little attention in social psychology. Social psychological examinations of group phenomena and intergroup relations deal with a wide range of processes and influences but the effects of time are often neglected (Levine & Moreland, 1990; Tuckman, 1965; Worchel, 1996).

Nevertheless, Tuckman proposed a well-known stage model of the development of groups over time. Tuckman (1965) recognized the distinct phases that groups go through and argued that groups need to experience each stage (up to stage four at least) before they can achieve maximum effectiveness. The stages are as follows:

1. Forming: Here, individuals hope to be accepted by others and avoid conflict or controversy. People focus on busying themselves with routines such as group organization, structure and roles. Individuals learn about each other and their task. Little gets done in this stage, which is mainly concerned with orientation and gathering information.
2. Storming: Everyone in the group now knows one another and so the group begins to address issues (see Figure 8.2). This phase is characterized by conflict. Group members

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FIGURE 8.2 Tuckman's (1965) model of group development A group may need to 'storm' before it can perform.

question the role of the work of the group and the roles/responsibilities within the group. Some group members will wish to retain the security of phase 1. Conflict in the group may be suppressed in the interests of harmony and the group task, or will be addressed in this phase.

3 Norming: The rules of engagement are established, roles and responsibilities are agreed and conflict has been addressed. People in the group understand each other better and can appreciate the skills and experience that others bring to the group. This stage is characterized by listening, support and flexibility. People feel they are part of a cohesive, effective group. A common sense of identity and purpose emerges.

4 Performing: This stage is characterized by a state of interdependence and flexibility. Not all groups reach this phase. Here, everyone in the group knows each other well enough to trust one another and work together or independently. Roles and responsibilities change according to needs in a flexible and harmonious manner. People feel comfortable and have good morale. Because relations within the group are good, the group can be directed towards the task.

5 Adjourning: This phase was added later (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). Here, the group completes the task and disengages. People in the group come to terms with the task having been completed and the group now ends. Sometimes, adjourning can occur if group members lose interest or motivation and the group dissolves (van Vugt & Hart, 2004).

Group socialization

Tuckman's model of group development continues to be influential in psychology and management to the present day (e.g., Cronin, Weingart & Todorova, 2011; Kirschner, Kreijns, Phielix & Fransen, 2015). However, it is incomplete as a model of how groups evolve through time, because it does not focus on the perspective of the individuals who belong to the group. Since individuals come and go, different members of a group can be in different stages of membership at the same time. Even in an established group, the departure of influential old-timers, and the arrival of dynamic newcomers, can shake things up.

Group socialization The process of group members coming together to meet each other's needs and accomplish goals over time.

To take the perspective of individuals into account, Moreland and Levine devised a model of **group socialization** (Levine & Moreland, 1994; Moreland & Levine, 1982, 1984, 2001). In this model, the interrelationships between the group and its individual members are important. Specifically, group members come together to meet each other's needs and accomplish goals.

According to Moreland and Levine's model, individuals and the group are constantly evaluating one another to determine how rewarding or worthwhile the interrelationships are. These evaluations bring about feelings of commitment that can change (upwards or downwards) over time. If the changes are significant, the group may cross a 'decision criterion', bringing about role transition. In other words, individuals within the group can occupy different roles within the group at different times. More specifically, Moreland and Levine argue that there are five membership phases. These are:

1 Investigation: Here, an individual is a prospective member of the group. The individual engages in reconnaissance and the group engages in recruitment. If an 'entry criterion' or level of commitment is met by both the group and the individual, the individual enters the group and socialization begins. There are many forms of

investigation in everyday life. If you are looking for work (and are therefore a potential new member of an organization), you will examine employment advertisements and investigate – if you can afford to be choosy – whether the company looks good to work for. If the company is looking for new members, it will typically advertise a job, and will then scrutinize the CVs and the characters of applicants. The processes in friendship, special interest and political groups may look different but they have the same basic structure of reconnaissance by new members and recruitment and scrutiny by the group. What attributes do groups look for in deciding whether to accept or reject a prospective member? One might think that groups that are focused on results, such as work groups, would be most interested in a person's competence. However, it turns out that their perceived morality is more important. A person with high moral standing may enhance a group's sense of self-worth and togetherness, whereas a person of low moral character may threaten both. In studies by van der Lee, Ellemers, Scheepers and Rutjens (2017), Dutch undergraduate students working together in small business-focused groups perceived immoral (vs. incompetent) group members to be more different from the group, more of a threat, and were more likely to reject them (see Figure 8.3). On their part, prospective group members also prefer to join moral organizations and work teams even more than competent ones (e.g., van Prooijen & Ellemers, 2015).

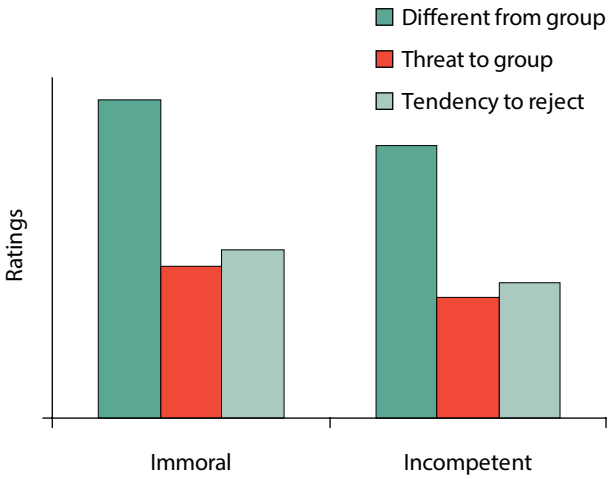


FIGURE 8.3 Immorality, more than incompetence, makes prospective members unattractive to groups
Group members see prospective recruits as more different to the group, more of a potential threat to the group, and are more likely to reject them, if they are immoral, rather than incompetent. Incompetence is not an attractive quality of potential group members, but it is less unattractive than immorality. In general, people's warmth and morality (i.e., communion), is even more important to others than their competence and ambition (i.e., agency), as we saw in Chapter 3.

Source: Data from van der Lee et al. (2017), Study 1

2 Socialization: The individual is now a new member of a group and the group attempts to assimilate the person into the group. During this phase, the group member attempts to accommodate to the group. For successful socialization to occur, the individual and group need to reach a critical level of commitment. If so, the 'acceptance criterion' is reached and acceptance occurs. The maintenance phase of group membership begins. This phase was investigated by Ashforth, Sluss and Saks (2007) in a survey of business and engineering graduates in their first seven months of work. They found that the more companies invested in proactive, formal socialization (e.g., special occasions to welcome and train new employees), *and* the more new employees acted independently to socialize themselves, the better the outcome. When the company and the employee both committed like this to socialization, the employees learned more, they were better psychologically adjusted and indicated more desire to stay with the group (that is, not to leave the company). Importantly, joining the group does not necessarily mean losing one's original identity. Groups that try to strip away too much of an individual's previous identity – a process called *divestiture* – risk exposing individuals to stress and uncertainty. On the other hand, groups that embrace and value their employees' previous identities – a process called *investiture* – may create a sense of 'psychological safety' (Edmondson, 2004). In their study, Ashforth et al. (2007) found that investiture did not affect

employees' learning but helped boost their wellbeing and commitment to the group. Note that just as a person's perceived morality may be more important than their competence in the group's decision about who to recruit, it is also bears more weight on the group's willingness to socialize that person. A study of Italian school teachers found that they were more willing to help a new manager to adjust if they perceived them as moral, while their perceived competence made less difference (Pagliaro, Brambilla, Sachhi, D'Angelo & Ellemers, 2013).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Stanley Kubrick's classic 1987 war film *Full Metal Jacket* is worth watching as a case study in group socialization processes. It is an interesting exploration of – among other things – the socialization stage. It portrays a brutal system of socialization in the US Marine Corps at the time of the Vietnam War. Trainee soldiers are encouraged to forget their previous identities and undergo a series of tough, deindividuating training drills. This practice seems to have risks. Some soldiers thrive on it and are spurred to learn quickly. For others, the loss of their original identity is disorienting. More recently, fans of the TV series *Game of Thrones* will be familiar with the harsh socialization regime undergone by Arya Stark as she attempts to join the cult of the Faceless Men. Arya is required to give up her personal identity and refer to herself only as 'A Girl'. In real life, the practice of *hazing*, in which people are subjected to name calling, humiliating tasks and even beatings, leads to psychological problems, injuries and even deaths in sports teams (Waldron, 2015), university social groups (Parks, Jones, Ray & Hughey, 2015), and even in groups as apparently harmless as marching bands (Silveira & Hudson, 2015). People's willingness to undergo these treatments demonstrates how much belonging to groups means to them.

3 Maintenance: The individual is now an accepted member of the group. Role negotiation occurs between the individual and the group regarding the specific duties the individual might engage in, such as leadership, for rewards. The maintenance phase can last for a long time but sometimes commitment on both sides can fall. For example, the individual may not agree on their assigned role, or may deviate from what is expected of group members. In one study, workers identified several kinds of deviance in the workplace, including theft, destruction of property, misuse of information, time or other resources, unsafe behaviour, poor attendance, poor work quality, abuse of alcohol or drugs, and bad or hostile language (Gruys & Sackett, 2003). On the other hand, groups may fail to value or invest in their members properly. Some group members may be unfairly favoured over others by the leadership of the group (Kacmar & Baron, 1999). If people do not feel that their ongoing position in the group is safe, for example if their jobs are insecure, they are more likely to display deviant behaviour (Huang, Wellman, Ashford, Lee & Wang, 2017). If these kinds of failures occur on either side, the 'divergence criterion' is reached and the group member becomes marginalized. The process of resocialization begins.

4 Resocialization: The group makes efforts to reassimilate the individual and the individual attempts to accommodate to the group. If this process is successful, commitment increases and convergence may occur (the reverse of divergence). If not, and commitment falls further, the 'exit criterion' may be met and the individual exits

the group. The individual becomes an ex-member and the process of remembrance (5) begins. Processes of resocialization of established group members are often harsher and less forgiving than those of socialization of new members, as was demonstrated in a set of experiments by Pinto, Marques, Levine and Abrams (2010). Portuguese high school and university students evaluated full members more harshly than new members of their student group when they deviated from its norms (e.g., by saying 'I think university students are not mature enough to know what's best for them'). They were also more strongly in favour of harsh responses to full members (e.g., forcing or threatening them to adopt the group's normal perspective). In contrast, they were more willing to adopt gentle persuasion with new members (e.g., using rational arguments to convince them of the merit of the group's position). Apparently, more is expected of full than new members. Thus, if you break the normative 'rules' of a group you have just joined, the socialization processes may be relatively gentle and educative. Resocialization may be less pleasant (but is not always harsh or punitive; for a review, see Moreland & Levine, 2001).

5 Remembrance: The individual reminisces about being a member of the group and the group remembers the individual as part of its tradition. Levels of commitment eventually become low for both the individual and the group. Although the individual has left the group, there are continued feelings of obligation and loyalty. Moreland and McGinn (1999) demonstrated this point by having groups of students work together on an art poster. The groups were then dissolved. Participants were later exposed to criticism of the poster their group had made. This was rated as more upsetting, and was more likely to be rejected, when participants believed it came from former members of their group than former members of another group (Figure 8.4). In studies with British, Indian and American participants, Travaglino, Abrams, Randsley de Moura, Marques and Pinto (2014) found that the way in which former ingroup members are remembered by the group depends on where they went after they left. If they simply deserted the group, they are rated no more harshly than people who have left other groups. However, if they have defected to a rival group, they are judged particularly harshly.

Although it is argued that these basic processes are common to most groups, they can mean different things for different groups. Take, for example, the divergence that occurs in Moreland and Levine's model. This may be unexpected, such as when someone within a group is dissatisfied with their role and chooses to leave. Resocialization might be possible in such a case if the individual and the group can reconcile their differences and negotiate a new role for the individual. But, sometimes divergence is not entirely expected. For example, a student leaves school to enter university. This is a case of role transition, and the process of resocialization into the current group (school) is not possible. Indeed, role transitions such as this are important aspects of group life. Brinthaupt, Moreland and Levine (1991) and Moreland and Levine (1989) have investigated these sorts of role transitions in some detail. These transitions can

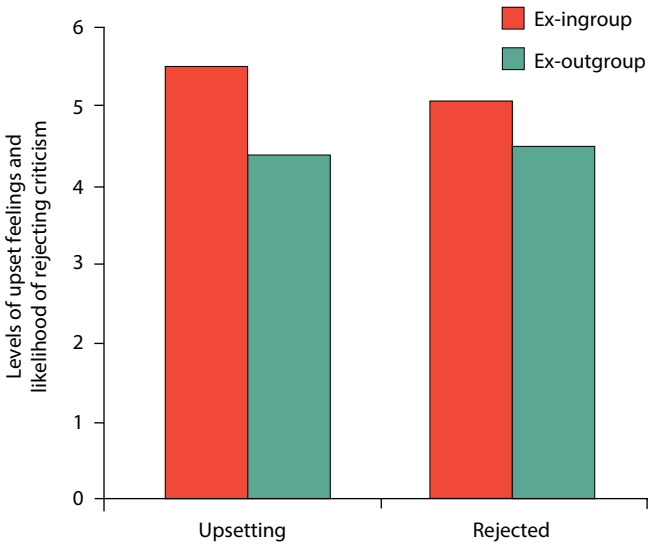


FIGURE 8.4 Psychological importance of the 'remembrance' phase of group socialization Participants were more upset by, and more likely to reject, criticism of their former group's work when it came from other members of their former group, rather than members of other groups. The ties that bind groups together continue to influence people, even after they are formally cut.

Source: Data from Moreland and McGinn (1999)

often become ritualized events, rites of passage, and occasionally involve *initiation rites*. They can be pleasant and marked with ceremony and gifts (e.g., a wedding), but can often be unpleasant and involve humiliation (e.g., the associated 'stag do'). Such events, although sometimes painful, can serve to publicly recognize the role transition, help individuals become accustomed to their new role, and enhance commitment to the new group. Social psychologists explain people's acceptance of unpleasant initiation rituals in terms of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) (see also Chapter 4). An unpleasant initiation creates dissonance – feeling unpleasant about undergoing an embarrassing initiation rite, and feeling negative about the group – which can be reduced by focusing on the positive rather than the negative aspects of the group. This is a way of maintaining loyalty towards the group.

This cognitive dissonance effect was demonstrated in a study by Aronson and Mills (1959). The researchers recruited female participants to take part in a group discussion about the psychology of sex. They were about to join the discussion but were first asked to read a boring excerpt of the discussion. Participants were then divided into three groups. One group performed a mild initiation task to read out five words with vague sexual meaning. One group performed a much more embarrassing initiation task to read out sexually explicit passages. Finally, a control group had no task. Results revealed that the group asked to perform the extreme initiation rated the discussion as much more interesting than the other two groups. Arguably, the embarrassing and uncomfortable task of reading out sexually explicit passages created a state of dissonance. For participants, it is likely that being aware that they had completed an unpleasant task in order to join the group discussion was dissonant with knowledge that the discussion itself was rather boring. The more unpleasant the initiation task, the more difficult it is to imagine that it was not so unpleasant after all. The only viable way for participants to reconcile the dissonance, then, it is to revise their opinion of the group discussion (it was not so boring, after all).

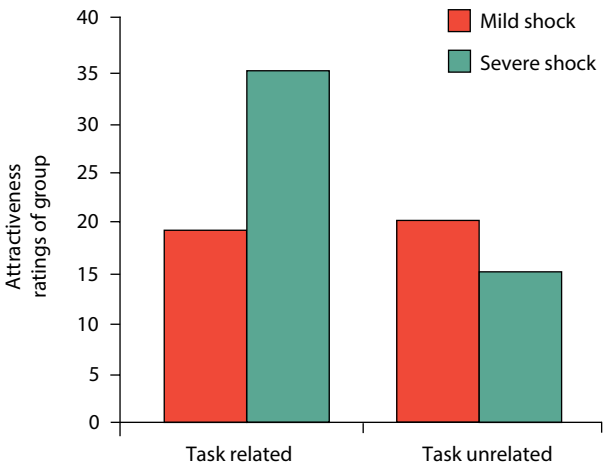


FIGURE 8.5 Initiation tasks and cognitive dissonance
When an unpleasant task (severe electric shock) is perceived to be an initiation into a group, the group is seen as more attractive than when the task is perceived to be unrelated to the group. Compared to participants who received only a mild shock, the participants who received a severe shock rated the group as much more attractive, arguably as a result of cognitive dissonance (see Chapter 4).

Source: Data from Gerard and Mathewson (1966)

Importantly, this effect seems to be specific to situations where the unpleasant task is perceived to be an initiation. Gerard and Mathewson (1966) replicated Aronson and Mills' study, including a condition where the more unpleasant task (receiving a severe electric shock in this case, compared to only a mild shock) was perceived to be unrelated to the later group task. Evaluation of the group was not affected in this condition, arguably because participants did not experience dissonance (they had not undergone the first task in order to join the group) (see Figure 8.5). In later research, Lodewijkz and Syroit (1997) found that severe initiation rites did not increase attraction, but merely made initiates feel lonely and depressed. Still later, Mann, Feddes, Doosje and Fischer (2016) found that being humiliated during initiation rituals lead initiates to withdraw rather than affiliate with other new group members. This negative effect did not happen when new members were initiated in groups (rather than alone), and felt that they could rely on each other for social support. However, the study showed that at best, severe initiation rites were useless, and at worst, they were harmful to the group in that they reduced new members' attraction to it.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Search online and read more about different types of initiation rites or 'rites of passage' from around the world. Notice how they vary in severity and degree of embarrassment for the initiated person.

Groups can therefore benefit from positive socialization. **Socialization outcomes** describe how members and the group as a whole feel about how they functioned to reach the group objective. The most prominent of these outcomes, for social psychology, is group cohesion.

Socialization outcomes These relate to how members of the group feel about how they functioned to reach the group's purpose. The most prominent outcome is group cohesion.

Group cohesion

Once a group is operating, one of its main features is **group cohesion** – the degree to which it holds together as an entity. A group's level of cohesion depends on group members' mutual support for one another and consistency of conduct or behaviour. As such, it is similar to the concept of entitativity discussed earlier, where entitative groups appear to be coherent and 'bound' together as a unit. Of course, cohesion differs between groups. Some groups are not at all cohesive and from the outside, some groups can look very little like groups. On the other hand, some groups are highly cohesive and appear almost impenetrable from the outside. So, what makes a group cohesive? What psychological processes draw people together to form cohesive units?

Group cohesion The extent to which a group holds people to one another (and the group as a whole), which gives the group a sense of unity and commonality.

Festinger, Schachter and Back (1950) argued that the key ingredients determining a group's level of cohesion are its attractiveness (both of the group and its members) and how much the group satisfies individual goals. These forces are depicted in Figure 8.6.

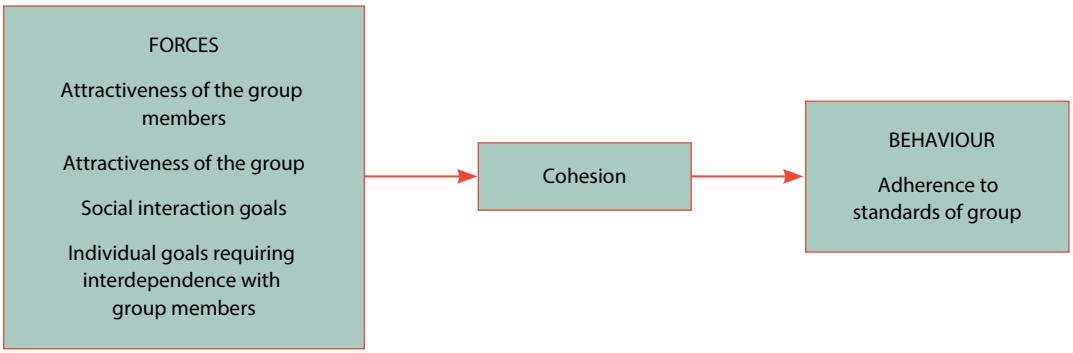


FIGURE 8.6 Festinger et al.'s (1950) model of group cohesion Forces act on the individual to make the group cohesive. Group cohesion then determines individual adherence to group standards.

Source: Hogg (1992). Reproduced by permission of Michael A. Hogg

Group cohesion is typically measured by asking people how much they like or enjoy interacting with other group members, following the approach originally taken by Festinger et al. (1950; for a review, see Dion, 2000). Subsequent research has shown that group cohesion is strongly related to individuals' willingness to adhere to the norms and standards of the group. This can have important implications for the wellbeing of groups and individuals alike. For example, Dunlop, Falk and Beauchamp (2013) showed that the

cohesion of exercise classes in Canada had a strong impact on individuals' adherence to exercise regimes. They also found that the cohesion of these groups changed over time. As they became more or less coherent, so did the adherence of its members to the exercise regime.

Photo by Geert Pieters on Unsplash

However, others argue that quantifying group cohesion by measuring attractiveness is not always appropriate. Specifically, some theorists argue that if social psychologists measure individual-level attractiveness, they are not capturing a process that is unique to groups (Hogg, 1992; Turner, 1984, 1985). They are simply examining interpersonal attraction. These researchers showed that group-level variables, such as group prototypicality and norms, are significantly related to group-based social attraction but not individual-based social attraction (e.g., Hogg & Hardie, 1991). Thus, some of the basic structural features of groups, and not simply interpersonal attraction, can determine how groups hang together to form a cohesive unit. We examine some of these structural features of groups in the next section.

TIME TO REFLECT

Think of your most important social groups. How cohesive are they? Can you think of some of the differences between your more cohesive and less cohesive groups?

GROUP STRUCTURE

As we mentioned earlier, groups vary in many simple ways, such as in their size and composition. Groups also exist for many different purposes. Subsequently, they tend to have organizational systems that enable them to meet their objectives. Here, we discuss some of the structural features of groups that enable them to fulfil their purposes. We outline the important role of norms in defining group structure and determining group members' behaviour. We also discuss how social roles and social status shape the nature of groups.

Norms

Have you ever been in a situation where you unintentionally (or intentionally) offended someone with your behaviour? Perhaps you laughed at a funeral or shouted in a library. Perhaps you pushed into a long queue at your local supermarket. On your travels, you may have said or done something that angered someone from another country. What happened in these situations? How did you feel? These are examples of basic social norm violations, which can often have disastrous effects. Indeed, sometimes when we violate social norms, we are shunned by and excluded from the group, as we will see later (Marques, Abrams & Serodio, 2001).

Social norms such as these are strong determinants of our behaviours. Norms are defined as the uniformities of behaviour and attitudes that determine, organize and differentiate groups from other groups. They are the formal or informal rules unique to specific groups, which are adopted to regulate its members' behaviours. Some norms are basic rules that everyone is supposed to obey (e.g., being quiet in a cinema) and others are dependent on the culture of the group (e.g., what colour clothing is appropriate to wear at a funeral). It is useful to bear in mind that there are two types of social norms. **Descriptive norms** describe what most people in a group think, feel or do – whether it is good or bad. **Injunctive norms**, on the other hand, describe what most people in a group agree is the good or right thing do to – whether or not most people actually do it. Both of these norms can influence behaviour, sometimes in different ways (e.g., Kormos, Gifford & Brown, 2015; Pedersen, Grønhøj & Thøgersen, 2015; Smith, Louis & Abraham, 2017; Stok, Ridder, Vet & Wit, 2014).

Social norms Uniformities of behaviour and attitudes that determine, organize and differentiate groups from other groups.

Descriptive norms Norms that most people follow, whether they are right or wrong.

Injunctive norms Norms that are perceived as being approved of by other people.

Much of the time, social norms are written, formalized or spoken openly and indeed this is often effective. A study by Cialdini, Reno and Kallgren (1990) demonstrated how the open expression of expected behaviour has a strong influence on people's actions. Cialdini et al. placed flyers on the windows of cars parked in a university car park. Some flyers expressed a clear anti-littering message (in the form of an injunctive norm): 'April is Keep Arizona Beautiful Month. Please Do Not Litter', while others carried a message irrelevant to littering: 'April is Arizona's Fine Arts Month. Please Visit Your Local Art Museum'. The researchers observed the car owners' behaviour and counted the number of each type of flyer that had been thrown on the ground. They found that 25 per cent of people who had received an irrelevant message threw the flyer away before getting into their cars, compared with only 10 per cent of those who had received the anti-littering norm message (see also Chapter 9). Thus, direct communication of norms can be effective.

More recently, Sparkman and Walton (2017) showed that norms can influence behaviour even before they are established. For example, it is currently normative to eat meat in most Western countries, but this norm is changing, with more and more people reducing or eliminating meat from their diet. When this dynamic (i.e., changing) norm was communicated to participants in Sparkman and Walton's (2017) studies, American participants indicated that they were more interested in eating less meat in the future, and ordered twice as many meatless options in a restaurant. The authors found that these effects were mediated by two processes – intention to conform to the new norm (they called this 'preconformity'), and a response to the importance of the issue to others and the effort others were investing in it.

One way of looking at Sparkman and Walton's (2017) results is that they show the difference between descriptive and injunctive norms. People recognize that most people eat meat (descriptive norm), but perceive the emergence of a norm that eating meat is morally problematic (injunctive norm), even if they are not living up to the norm yet. If descriptive norms alone

determined our behaviour, it is hard to imagine how societal attitudes and behaviour could change over time. In Chapter 12, we shall see how emerging injunctive norms may have served to reduce racism and other forms of prejudice through the 20th century – but may equally serve to promote racism and prejudice in the 21st.

Some norms are more subtle and not explicitly stated, but still have a powerful influence on people's behaviour. Even when we violate the most implicit and unspoken of norms, we often find out when we have transgressed. **Ethnomethodology** is the study of the everyday methods that people use for the production of social order. It is done by documenting the methods and practices through which people make sense of their social world (Garfinkel, 2002). One of the techniques involves people violating social norms so that attention is drawn to them. It is intended that the violation of the norm would uncover the true norm underneath. This technique is commonly known as a **breaching experiment**, in that it seeks to examine people's reactions to the breaching of common social norms or rules. Indeed, in Garfinkel's original work, students who were asked to behave differently than they normally would at home (e.g., to behave like polite, formal boarding students instead of their parents' children) were met with shock and surprise from their parents. Here, it was argued that the informal, intimate, often impolite norms of family life had been revealed and its violation elicited a strong reaction from the parents. Another example can be found in a study conducted on the New York subway in the 1970s. In this study (see Luo, 2004), Stanley Milgram asked able-bodied graduate students (posing as passengers) to board a train and ask able-bodied and seated passengers, without explanation, to give up their seats. As you will see in Chapter 9 when we learn about more of Milgram's research, people comply surprisingly often with such outrageous requests. In this case, 68 per cent of passengers gave up their seat willingly, suggesting that they were working to maintain a norm of polite and orderly behaviour in public transport. However, the students making the requests and hence violating this norm felt deeply uncomfortable, some 'freezing' and even reporting nausea (Luo, 2004). In a more recent example, Stanley, Barker, Edwards and McEwen (2015) had participants in and around Cardiff, Wales stand still and do nothing in busy public spaces. Their analysis focused on one participant who became intensely aware of her own stream of consciousness. Arguably, this highlights an implicit social norm in busy public spaces – attention is directed externally and people are effectively mindless. These reactions point to the power of social norms in guiding our behaviour. These often invisible rules of social behaviour help maintain social order but go largely unnoticed until they are violated (see Blass, 2004).

Ethnomethodology A method used for understanding 'hidden' social norms by analysing people's accounts and descriptions of their day-to-day activities.

Breaching experiment A technique used in ethnomethodology that seeks to examine people's reactions to violations of common social norms.

Free-Photos/Pixabay

FIGURE 8.7 The power of social norms How would you feel if you were to stand still and do nothing for a long time in a busy train station?

Furthermore, norms do not have to be explicit in order to influence our behaviour. In another study, Cialdini et al. (1990) placed participants in either a clean or dirty (littered) setting and observed the participants' littering behaviour. More people littered the dirty environment. Also, it was found that the percentage of people who littered was highest when participants saw someone littering an already dirty environment but lowest when people saw someone litter a clean environment. Cialdini et al. explained this apparent contradiction in terms of *norm accessibility* – the littering person's behaviour drew the participant's attention to the norm (to litter or not to litter), which subsequently influenced their behaviour (see Figure 8.8). In another condition where only one piece of rubbish was visible, people littered even less, supporting the idea that implicit and environmental cues lead people to really think about what behaviours are normative and anti-normative.

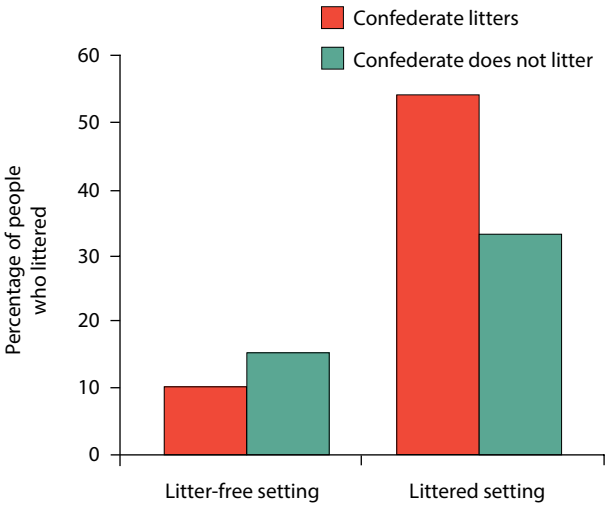


FIGURE 8.8 The effects of norms on littering In a litter-free setting, a confederate who litters draws attention to the implicit norm to keep the place clean and so people tend to litter less. On the other hand, a confederate seen littering an already dirty environment activates a norm of untidiness and people tend to litter more often.

Source: Data from Cialdini et al. (1990)

As we will see in Chapter 9, norms strongly influence our behaviour. In particular, they can determine what we say and do when we are unsure of how to behave. In this respect, they can provide us with useful **frames of reference** from which to judge (and recalibrate) our own behaviour (Sherif, 1935, 1937; Jacobs & Campbell, 1961). By establishing the normative behaviour of others in the group, we obtain a useful guide for our own responses.

Frames of reference The range of possible positions/attitudes/behaviours that people could adopt in a given situation. People use these frames of reference to guide their own thoughts and actions.

However, group norms can also change what we do and what we think even when we have already established our own internal frame of reference. Siegel and Siegel (1957) randomly assigned students entering a US college to different types of student residences. Some were assigned to sorority accommodation (where a conservative culture was dominant) and others were assigned to dormitory accommodation where they were exposed to more liberally minded norms. Siegel and Siegel measured students' levels of conservatism at the beginning of the year and again at the end of the year. In Figure 8.9, you can see that although the attitudes of both groups were similar at the beginning of the year, exposure to liberal norms significantly reduced conservatism at the end of the year.

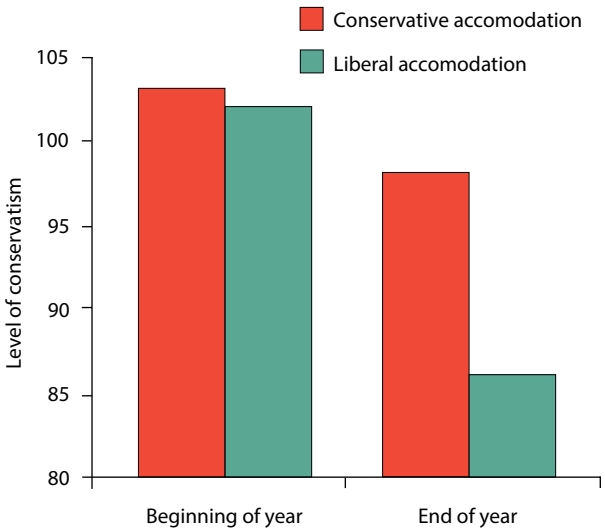


FIGURE 8.9 The effects of social norms on attitudes US college students were randomly assigned to conservative (sorority) accommodation or liberal (dormitory) lodgings. After a year at the college, and having been exposed to the different norms, the dormitory students became significantly more liberal in their attitudes.

Source: Data from Siegel and Siegel (1957)

As we can see, norms are powerful. But why do they guide people's behaviour so strongly? Going back to Cialdini et al.'s littering example, it is possible to highlight several reasons:

1 Norms are sometimes *enforced* so that people are motivated to adhere to them in order to receive rewards and avoid punishments. For example, if we litter, we may be fined, which is unpleasant – putting rubbish in the bin helps us to avoid the negative consequences of norm violation. Likewise, we adhere to written rules and laws because we do not want to suffer the consequences (for a review, see Simpson & Willer, 2015).

2 We often *internalize* norms and believe that they are right. For example, we do not litter (most of the time) because we know that throwing rubbish on the ground is not a nice or prosocial thing to do. These norms depend heavily on our social identity. If we feel strongly attached to a group, we will be more likely to adhere to its norms. For example, Duffy and Nesdale (2009) found that Australian school children were more inclined to bully other school children if they belonged to peer groups that supported bullying, and if they strongly identified with their peer groups. Conversely, Jones, Haslam, York and Ryan (2008) found that British school children who belonged to peer groups in which bullying was not the norm were more anti-bullying if they identified strongly with their group. When we internalize norms, we feel that adhering to them is proper or appropriate for us. Case, Sparks and Pavey (2015) found that British undergraduate students' drinking intentions were related to what drinking behaviours they thought were 'appropriate' for them, given the kinds of people they are and the groups to which they belong.

3 Norms can become *fixed action patterns*. That is, we are so used to behaving according to a particular norm that it becomes a script that we follow *automatically* (see Chapter 4) once triggered by a certain cue. The British penchant for forming orderly queues is a famous example. Most of the time, this norm, like many others, leads to efficient and harmonious behaviour. But when the situation demands that people act differently, it can be a serious problem. In a tragic fire at Woolworth's in Manchester, England in 1979, some shoppers refused to leave the store, and there were even reports of people queueing at the tills while the fire was in progress. This adherence to a fixed action pattern, called 'task attachment' on research in fire safety, appeared to have been a factor in some of the deaths (Sime, 1994).

4 *Consensus* influences the power of norms to determine our behaviour. Seeing others perform a particular behaviour makes the behaviour look like the appropriate thing to do. If people consistently behave in a normative manner, you will also know that they expect you to do the same. As we saw in Cialdini et al.'s (1990) study, watching other people litter made people more likely to do the same. Likewise, if others are doing something normative, they will support you in the face of threats from people who do not share the same norms.

5 Norms are often *activated*. The more we interact with members of the group, the more we are exposed to group norms. The more we are aware of norms, the more we conform to them. For example, van der Werff and Steg (2015) found that Dutch residents who were chronically aware of energy-saving norms reported using energy more efficiently. Just being reminded of our group membership makes us think about the group and its norms (for a review, see Reynolds, Subašić & Tindall, 2015).

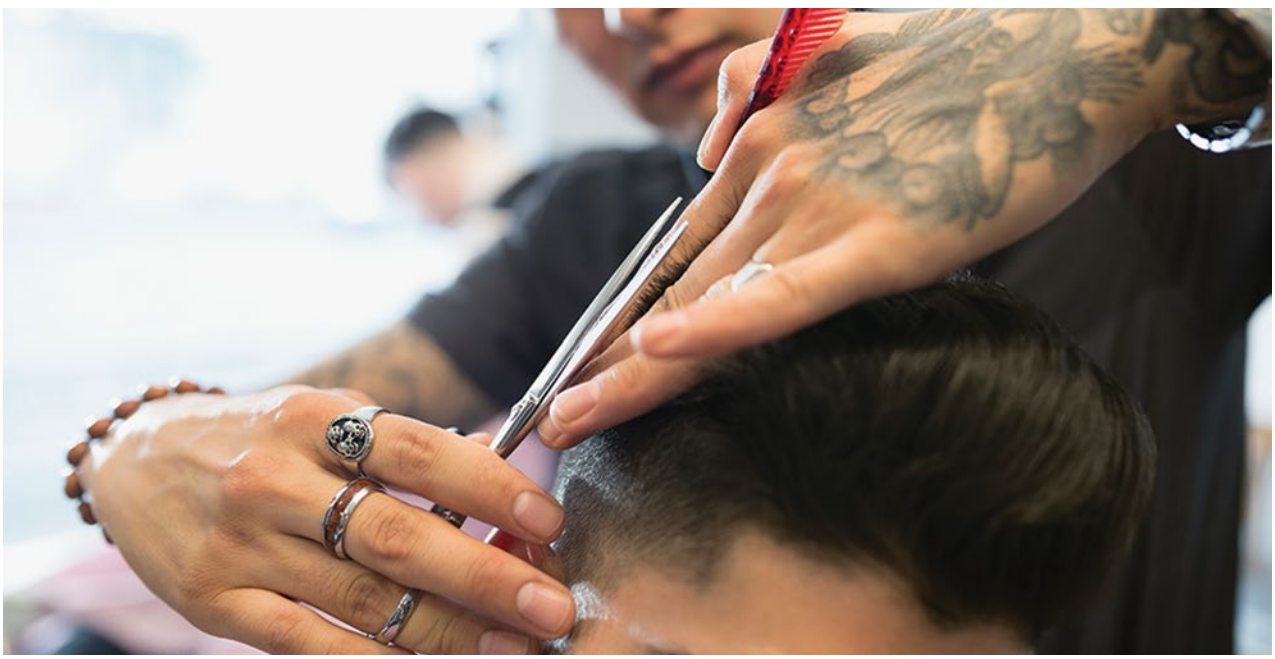
6 Norms act as useful *heuristics* that make our lives easier. When we are busy or in a complex situation, awareness of group norms gives us something to fall back on so that we know how to behave. Jacobson, Mortensen, and Cialdini (2011) asked participants how many more surveys they would like to complete. In one condition of an experiment, they activated a *descriptive* norm by telling participants that most participants stayed on to do several more surveys. When participants' ability to self-regulate was depleted after having already done a highly demanding attention control task (see Chapter 4 on ego depletion), they tended to agree more strongly with the request to stay on and do more surveys. Notably, when an *injunctive* norm was made salient, ego depletion tended to *reduce* compliance. These findings suggest that following injunctive norms, but resisting descriptive norms, requires self-control. As we saw in Chapter 4, there is some doubt about whether ego depletion is an effect that can be reliably replicated, and about

what causes it (Hagger et al., 2016; Lurquin & Miyake, 2017). Nonetheless, Jacobson, Mortenson, Jacobson and Cialdini (2015) obtained similar results when they measured participants' chronic ability to control their impulses, instead of manipulating people's self-control through ego depletion.

Intuitively, norms seem hard to change, resist, or defy. Indeed, most social psychological studies of norms examine how norms produce conformity and tend to be resistant to change. So much so that Moscovici (1976) criticized researchers for falling prey to 'conformity bias': that is, studying these aspects of norms and ignoring how people negotiate, challenge and change norms. Thankfully, there are now many studies showing that norms can be surprisingly flexible.

THE FLEXIBILITY OF SOCIAL NORMS

People have always mocked the fashions of previous decades. For example, moustaches and 'mullet' hairstyles (short at the front and sides, long at the back) were once fashionable for men and are now widely thought to be deplorable. The present popularity of tattoos was unthinkable in previous decades and may well fall out of popularity in future decades. What we call 'fashion' is really a set of norms about how we present ourselves to the world through clothes, makeup and hairstyles, and is a vivid example of how norms change through time. Changing norms are not usually as trivial as the whims of fashion. As we shall see in Chapter 12, for example, attitudes towards race, sexuality and gender have changed enormously over the previous century, with profound legal and social implications. As we shall see in Chapter 9, many of these changes in norms have been led by consistent, committed minority groups. The unfashionable ideas of today may become the norms of tomorrow. Evidence is growing that changes in norms play a crucial role in changes to individuals' behaviours, for example in health and environmental behaviours (Miller & Prentice, 2016), and social change, for example in attitudes to minorities (Morris, Hong, Chiu & Liu, 2015; Tankard & Paluck, 2016).



Getty Images/Hero Images

Norms can also be flexible in the sense that they allow people room to be different, rather than to conform to norms as if they were in a straitjacket. In fact, in what might seem a paradox, some norms support individuality, rather than conformity. Testing this idea, Hornsey, Jetten, McAuliffe and Hogg (2006) presented Australian students with descriptions of a student at their university who either opposed or supported the introduction of new tuition fees – and whose opinion, therefore, was either consistent or inconsistent with group norms. The student with the 'deviant' opinion was devalued relative to the student who opposed fees – but much less so if students were informed that students at their university were generally in favour of individualism, as opposed to collectivism. When valuing individualism, including individuality and uniqueness, appears to be a group norm, there is less pressure on group members to conform to the prevailing opinions of a group. In a later study, Hutchison, Jetten and Gutierrez (2011) found that British undergraduates evaluated fellow students with deviant opinions (e.g., those in favour of British involvement in the war in Iraq, or opposed to environmental protection) more favourably when they were led to believe the student body was very diverse, for example in their social backgrounds and hobbies. In a second study, they found that this effect of group homogeneity depended on whether students were described as valuing diversity. Specifically, participants were more tolerant of the deviant opinion if they were led to believe the student body was homogeneous (similar), but that they valued diversity.

Roles and status

Social roles
Expectations shared by group members about how particular people in the group are supposed to behave.

In addition to social norms, many groups have well-defined **social roles**, or shared expectations of how particular people are supposed to behave in groups. The distinction between norms and roles is fairly simple. Whereas norms determine how all groups members should (or do) act, roles specify how people who hold *particular positions* within a group should behave. For example, a work team will usually consist of a boss or line manager and workers. These roles have clearly defined standards of behaviour and a line manager and their workers are expected to behave in different ways to make the group function appropriately. Likewise, students working on a collaborative group project will often establish clear roles such as assigning one person to write the introduction, one person to write the method and so on. Each group member therefore has a prescribed role that helps the group meet its purpose. Roles emerge in groups so that members have a clear idea of what they need to do, how they should behave, and what their place is within the group. In general, findings suggest that when people in a group stick to a set of well-defined roles, they are more satisfied and perform better (Barley & Bechky, 1994; Bettencourt & Sheldon, 2001).

However, clearly defined social roles are not always a good thing. As we will see in Chapter 9, being too embedded in social roles can sometimes have seriously negative consequences. In particular, you will read about the Stanford Prison Experiment where young men were assigned to the role of prisoner or guard in a simulated prison environment at Stanford University (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973). In this study, the guards became embedded in their roles and performed role-consistent behaviour – such as brutality and intimidation towards the prisoners – to such an extent that the study had to be ended prematurely. Do social roles sometimes 'take over' our personal identities and make us lose sight of some of the things we would normally do? We examine this issue in more detail in the Critical Focus box in Chapter 9. Social roles might also become problematic when they are, or seem, illegitimate or arbitrary. In the Critical Focus box below, we examine the case of gender roles.

CRITICAL FOCUS

Gender roles: a minefield of science and politics

Gender roles are often raised as examples of roles that do not always make logical sense. Many cultural groups have expectations about how women and men ought to behave. For example, it is often the case that women are expected to rear children and maintain a household at the expense of having a career, while men are supposed to work and earn money for the family (Wood & Eagly, 2010). Associated with these gender roles is a pattern of basic male dominance or patriarchy, in which men have more status and power than women. Men generally have more status and power in all contemporary human cultures; for example, having more access to high-paying jobs, being paid more for doing the same jobs, and being more represented in the highest levels of leadership in politics, religion and business (Lopez-Claros & Zahidi, 2005). Gender roles are interesting to social psychologists. They touch all our lives on a daily basis – perhaps no system of social categorization and specialization is so universal and potent – and the study of gender roles requires us to think about stereotypes (Chapter 11), ideologies, such as sexism (Chapter 4), and the biological bases of our behaviour. Although there are many interesting scientific questions we can ask about gender roles, one of the most central questions is whether current gender roles, and particularly the disproportionate assignment of women to domestic, nurturing roles and men to competitive, economically valued roles, are an inevitable feature of human life.

Here is where disagreements begin. For some researchers, male dominance, or patriarchy, has evolved to become an intrinsic part of human nature. In this model, early humans evolved in hunter-gatherer bands in which men were given the economically valuable role of hunting, and needed to control women in order to be sure that the children they were investing in were really theirs (Kaplan & Robson, 2002; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). However, other researchers dispute this. Evolutionary arguments like this tend to involve speculation about how early humans lived, often in the absence of archeological evidence. Some evidence now suggests that matriarchy was important in early human societies, with female alliances forming to look after children, meaning that women did not depend on men as much as has been suggested (Opie & Power, 2008).

Since the study of 'race' and racial superiority faded in the aftermath of the Second World War, arguments about nature versus nurture are never more politically loaded than when they touch on gender roles (Wood & Eagly, 2010). If gender roles arise from societal conditions, they presumably can be changed, reversed or eliminated as society sees fit, but if they are (to some extent) instilled in us by evolution, then complete gender equality may be an impossible dream. The clear political danger of putting forward evolutionary arguments for gender roles is to imply that gender roles cannot – and perhaps should not – be entirely revised. This political concern, especially with reference to gender, has left some social psychologists uneasy about evolutionary social psychology. Thus, Reicher (2011) wrote that evolutionary social psychology can lead us to 'reify all the imperfections and inequalities of our contemporary world' (p. 353).

Despite this unease, even if we were to scientifically establish that gender roles have evolved, this does not necessarily mean they are right or appropriate for contemporary society. Evolutionary researchers argue against committing the 'naturalistic fallacy' – to show that a certain behavioural tendency has evolved does not mean that it is right or should be approved of. Conditions have changed, and it is possible that we have inherited psychological dispositions that are no longer right for us. Indeed, Dawkins (1976) pointed out that genes have evolved in order to replicate themselves and do not necessarily have our interests at heart, so sometimes it is appropriate to seek to counteract their influence on us. Also, few social psychologists would wish scientists to be censored, or even to censor themselves, on political grounds. Our job is to discover truths, even if these truths are not always comfortable or palatable to us.

Nonetheless, progress on gender inequality is frustratingly slow. For example, traditional stereotypes of men and women persist. Women are paid less than men for doing the same jobs, and inequality of pay is changing only slowly despite legislation and policy. In heterosexual couples in which the man and woman do the same amount of paid work, she will spend 50 per cent more of her time looking after the children, and doing domestic chores, than he will (for a review, see Wood & Eagly, 2010). Some changes present women with a double-edged sword, since they are now under pressure to build a career and fulfil their gender roles (e.g., Brislin, 1993). There is evidence of a 'backlash' against recent advances in gender equality, such that women (and men) who do not live up to old-fashioned gender types are derogated, especially when their deviance from gender types is of a kind that threatens male dominance. Underpinning many of these gender role attitudes is precisely the belief, held widely by members of the public, that gender differences are biologically ordained – that men and women are inevitably different, and will inhabit different roles because of their

biology. This is called 'essentialism'. When people believe, or are led to believe, that there are fundamental, psychologically important biological differences between men and women, they are more likely to endorse gender inequality and oppose efforts to change it. The clear danger in putting forward evolutionary explanations of gender role specialization is to reinforce current gender roles and make gender equality more difficult to achieve. This is a heavy responsibility, and demands that scientists exercise high standards of skill in designing and conducting their research, and caution in interpreting the results.

Questions

1. Using the Internet, can you find any gender equality statistics for your country? For example, how large is the 'pay gap' in your country, and how overrepresented are men in political and business leadership?
2. Do you think that scientists' political persuasion may influence the scientific models they use? For example, do you think that more conservative, traditional or right-wing scientists may be drawn to evolutionary social psychological explanations of gender roles, whereas more feminist, left-wing scientists may be drawn to accounts of gender roles that emphasize socialization and culture? How would you test this possibility in a study?
3. Using the Internet, find media coverage of studies of gender differences. Do these tend to favour nature (biology, hormones, evolution) or nurture (socialization and culture) explanations?

Gender roles Shared expectations about how women and men are supposed to behave.

EXPLORING FURTHER

It is widely believed (and probably rightly so) that gender roles are particularly restrictive for women. However, it is also important to consider how gender roles can present challenges for men. Using an Internet search engine or database such as PsycINFO, can you find studies that have examined the effects of male gender roles, or expectations of what men should be like? What did these studies show?

Thus, social roles can often cause us conflict. Interestingly too, they can change who we are. A study by Twenge demonstrates how changing gender roles can influence our personalities. Twenge (1997, 2001) tracked women's social status in the USA between 1931 and 1993. She compared this with women's own reports of their assertiveness. In general, women's self-ratings of assertiveness followed the same pattern as their social status. For example, with the improvements in social status between 1931 and 1945 (e.g., more women gaining university degrees and more women in the workforce), women reported feeling more assertive. Likewise, after 1968, when the feminist movement took hold and women's social status improved, they again reported greater levels of assertiveness. The period in between (1946–67), where more women stayed at home and less went to university, was marked by a decrease in self-reports of assertiveness. This effect is shown in Figure 8.10.

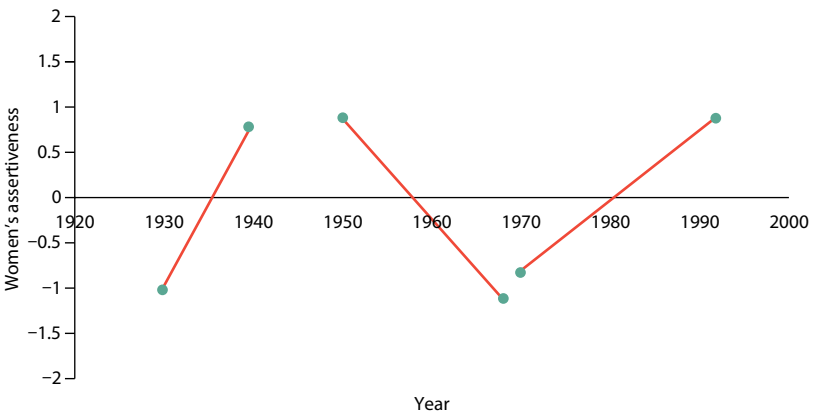


FIGURE 8.10 The influence of changing gender roles on personality
Women's self-reported assertiveness mirrors trends in their social status. Prewar improvements in rated assertiveness mirrored similar improvements in their status. Postwar movements to more traditional social roles were associated with lower ratings of assertiveness. However, women's social status recovered with the feminist movement and self-ratings of assertiveness again increased.

Source: Twenge (2001)

Further research by Twenge and colleagues indicates that as time moved on from the 1990s to the 2010s, women saw themselves as less and less

concerned with social harmony and being accommodating to others (a set of traits collectively called 'communal' or 'feminine'). In some respects, then, this social change seems to have continued since the 1990s. However, women's ratings of their 'masculinity' (traits referring to ambition) did not increase over that time (Donnelly & Twenge, 2017). In general, the roles that people occupy in groups (and society) are powerful in forming their behaviour, feelings and even their personality (Eagly & Steffen, 2000; Wood, Christensen, Hebl & Rothgerber, 1997).

TIME TO REFLECT

Why do you think that the late 20th century growth in women's so-called 'masculinity' may have arrested, while they are declining in femininity? After thinking about this for a while or discussing it with others, you might wish to read Donnelly and Twenge (2017) and evaluate both their methods and the explanations they came up with.

Of course, roles are often closely linked to one's **status** in general and the above example shows how gender roles and women's status in society are similar. Gender roles mean that women and men are not always treated equally. In many other groups too, the roles that people occupy are not equal. Thus, our discussion of roles naturally leads us into the issue of status.

Status Shared evaluations of the 'prestige' of roles within a group, the members of the group, or the group as a whole.

Some roles within a group are more valued than other roles and are associated with higher status. Generally, the leader of a group is accepted as the highest status position, but within groups we often see a hierarchy of roles, and subsequently a 'ranking' of the people who occupy the roles, which tends to be accepted by others both within and outside the group. Indeed, for a group role or individual member in a group to be seen to have status, the perception of status needs to be shared by others. There is little point in assuming that one has status if nobody around recognizes it.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Two films offer sensitively dramatized depictions of real-life gender transitions. *The Danish Girl* (2015) follows the transition of the painter Einar Wegener to Lili Elbe. *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) follows the story of Brandon Teena (born Teena Brandon) who transitioned to identify variously as intersex or as male. Both stories touch on the powerful norms that surround gender, and the price that can be paid for violating those norms. Arguably, they also explore how these norms are shaped by the unequal status afforded to male and female identities.

Group members who are seen to have status within a group display a tendency to initiate activities and suggest ideas – these suggestions are more likely than others' suggestions to be taken up by the group. For example, a person chairing a meeting may be more likely to make a suggestion that is agreed upon by the rest of the group because they are seen as having a certain level of standing or authority. However, a person's status within the group is not set forever and status differentials within a group can change over time. For example, a person chairing a meeting may not always do so and duties such as these may be shared between members of the group over time. Similarly, the head of an academic department at a university will typically serve a set amount of time before someone else is elected to do the job. One's status within a group can also differ across contexts. For example, an academic department head will have less status in a university-level meeting than in a departmental meeting. While they are 'in charge' in one context, they may be a regular group member in others.

How do status differentials emerge within groups? One explanation comes from Festinger's social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). According to this account, status hierarchies reflect social comparisons within the group. Being in groups presents people with relevant others with whom to compare themselves. We look at others, their opinions and their abilities and 'place' ourselves within the group according to certain valuable characteristics. Sometimes, this process happens quite naturally and everyone in a group is happy with their position. Frequently, however, status in a group is contested. One example is group leadership, a role that is often toughly contested (Figure 8.11). A group role such as this is a high status and desirable one because it brings with it a lot of power and influence. Thus, the process of social comparison with others is often competitive and role assignment is dependent on how people compare with others on status-relevant dimensions. One prospective leader may run a stronger and more convincing election campaign. Another candidate may simply impress their group with a demonstrated capacity to take the group forward. Obviously, not everyone can become the leader, so once the allocation of status is resolved within a group, people must be content with their own position. This is one way that status becomes a shared or consensual phenomenon within the group – people who do not win and become followers naturally feel – in some way – inferior to the emergent leader. In short, they have to learn to deal with it and one way to do this is to legitimize the status-relevant differences between themselves and the leader. In doing so, the prestige of the high status position is reinforced and perpetuated over time and as new leaders emerge or are elected.

Free-Photos/Pixabay

FIGURE 8.11 Status within groups Leadership is a highly coveted and contested role within a group.

Sometimes, people simply accept that other people in a group are of a higher status than themselves. Some research by Strodtbeck, James and Hawkins (1957) demonstrated this *status insitutionalization* in newly formed status hierarchies. They established mock juries whose role was to read transcripts of actual trials and produce verdicts based on the transcripts. They found that the high status role of jury 'foreman' was typically assigned to a person with higher status in real life. More specifically, the groups awarded the higher status positions in the experiment to people who held occupations outside the experiment such as teachers and other professionals rather than people who occupied working-class occupations like cleaners or mechanics. It may be that people simply expect some individuals to be associated with higher status roles in general because they occupy a high

status role (or roles) in society. Such **diffuse status characteristics** may not be directly associated with the group task at hand but they are generally positively evaluated and therefore generate favourable expectations. Race, gender, or social class may often function as diffuse status characteristics, hampering the efforts of disadvantaged group leaders to assume high status roles. For example, a professional individual such as a doctor or lawyer may know very little about making quality judgements about music (a **specific status characteristic**). Nevertheless, they may be more likely to be chosen as a band manager because they are seen as having status in another domain (Berger, Fisek, Norman & Zelditch, 1997; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986). Another example may be found in the 'think manger – think male' stereotype in which deeply embedded stereotypes make it easier to imagine men rather than women as leaders (e.g., CEOs, heads of state; e.g., Schein, 2001).

Diffuse status characteristics Attributes not directly relevant to the group task but positively valued in society.

Specific status characteristics Attributes directly relevant to the group task.

As we will see in Chapters 11 and 14, the legitimization of status differences *between* groups means that people often support systems that are unfair to them personally. **System justification theory** (Jost & Banaji, 2004) posits that people depend on social systems for wealth and security and are therefore motivated to justify those social systems, seeing them as fair and functional. When they come across inequality or unfairness, low status group members tend to internalize negative stereotypes of their group, to believe that authorities act in their interests, and believe that economic inequality is legitimate or even necessary (Jost, Pelham, Sheldon & Sullivan, 2003). They appear to legitimize existing social and economic arrangements about the same as high status group members do (Brandt, 2013), which is puzzling considering those arrangements work against their interests (Jost, 2017).

System justification theory Theory that people's dependence on social systems for wealth and security motivates them to justify these social systems and see them as fair.

In Chapter 14, we discuss how this system-justifying tendency of low status group members influences women's feelings of their own entitlements in employment settings (Bylsma & Major, 1994; Callahan-Levy & Meese, 1979), and for people to endorse inequality in their own society (Kay, Whitson, Gaucher & Galinsky, 2009).

People's expectations about ability and status can explain how status roles emerge within groups. These expectations may help people to deal with their position within the group if they are not the leader. People may not always simply 'deal with it' though. Often, the process of losing out on an important status dimension can make people feel uncomfortable and unhappy. People can deal with this dissatisfaction in other ways besides simply accepting or internalizing the idea that they are inferior. They may choose to emphasize the things they are good at and downplay the features on which they fall short. Again, these processes occur between groups too and group members often redefine the important features of their group on which they prefer to be evaluated. Dimensions that favour the ingroup (e.g. 'we are good at sport'), rather than disfavour the group (e.g., 'we are a poor country'), tend to be the preferred means of comparison for low status groups, especially if alternative groups (high status groups) are impermeable. This process, called **social creativity**, serves to maintain group members' self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). By engaging in comparisons on unorthodox dimensions that tend to favour their own group, people are able to feel good about their group even if they are low status on other dimensions (see also Haslam, 2001).

Social creativity Strategies that group members engage in to maintain the esteem of the group.

Furthermore, research from the system justification theory perspective suggests that people justify a system – regardless of their own position in the system – using complementary stereotyping. The idea is that if people are 'poor', they may be okay because they are probably 'happy'. On the other hand, the 'rich' may be 'miserable'. This line of reasoning implies that low status has its rewards and high status has its drawbacks (Kay & Jost, 2003). Also, if people think they can improve their status by leaving the group, they will do so, whereas if they cannot leave the group, they will seek to improve its status (see the discussion of social identity and intergroup relations in Chapter 11). It is clear that people will not always simply accept an inferior status position, or if they do, they have system-justifying mechanisms to make themselves feel reasonably good about it.

TIME TO REFLECT

Think about a specific group you belong to. Can you identify some of the norms of the group? Are there specific roles within the group? Is status a factor in this group? Does this status arise because of diffuse or specific status characteristics?

FITTING IN TO GROUPS

Norms, roles and status are important features that determine how individuals behave within groups. But what happens to people who violate these norms and behave in ways that are contradictory to their roles and status? Here, we discuss what happens to individuals when they deviate from group standards, when they do not quite fit the prototype of the group and when they are seen as 'impostors' within a group. We will consider the effects that such marginal group members can have on the group as a whole. We also consider how group deviance can sometimes lead to 'breakoff' groups being formed within the larger group.

Marginal group members/ 'deviants' People who deviate too far from prototypical group members and group norms.

Black sheep effect Derogation of deviant or marginal ingroup members.

Marginal group members ('deviants')

People who do not embody the group's most important attributes, or who 'deviate' too far from prototypical group members, are known as **marginal group members** or **deviants**. Whereas some group members have the capacity to exert influence over the group, deviants typically do not. On the contrary, they are often seriously disliked by the group. Research on the **black sheep effect** demonstrates how strongly groups can react to marginal group members (Abrams, Rutland, Cameron & Ferrell, 2007; Castano, Paladino, Coull & Yzerbyt, 2002; Doosje & Branscombe, 2003; Marques, Yzerbyt & Leyens, 1988; Pinto et al., 2010; Shin, Freda & Yi, 1999). We are all familiar with the concept of a 'black sheep' – meaning a person who goes against the standards of their family (or other important group) and is subsequently shunned by the group in some way. In an early study of this effect, Marques and Yzerbyt (1988) presented Belgian law students with taped speeches that had allegedly been made by other students. One of these speeches was good, and the other was truly bad. In the 'ingroup' conditions of the experiment, the law students were told that the speech was by another law student. In the 'outgroup' conditions, they were told that it was by a philosophy student. Participants rated the speeches, and the speaker (e.g., 'In your opinion, this person's capability to express ideas is ...'; 1 = weak, 7 = strong). As one might expect, the apparently competent speaker was rated more favourably when they were a member of the ingroup, that is, another law student (Figure 8.12). This is standard ingroup favouritism – in general, we tend to be biased towards our own 'kind' (see also Chapter 11). However, Marques and Yzerbyt found that if the speech was bad, the ingroup speaker was apparently rated *less* favourably than the outgroup speaker.

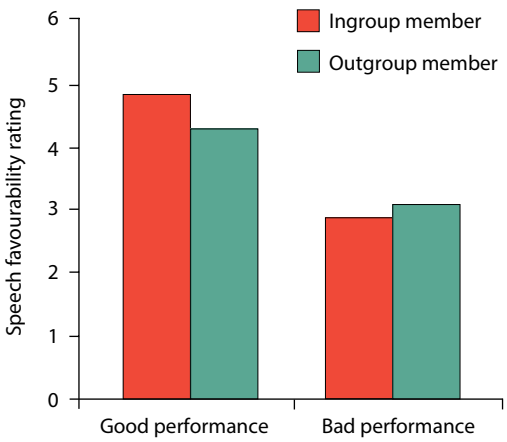


FIGURE 8.12 The black sheep effect Participants were presented with good or bad speeches. In keeping with the usual tendency to favour the ingroup, good speeches were rated more favourably when participants believed they were made by an ingroup, rather than outgroup, member. Bad speeches, however, were rated similarly, or even worse, when participants believed they came from an ingroup rather than an outgroup speaker.

Source: Data from Marques and Yzerbyt (1988) Study 1

Why do you think this happens? Marques et al.'s explanation is that deviant ingroup members are threatening to the positive

image of the ingroup (Marques et al., 2001). As we see later in this chapter when we consider social identity theory, people want to perceive their group in positive terms. In particular, they value its positive distinctiveness – its superiority, on valued dimensions of judgement, to other groups. A group member who deviates from the perceived high standards of the group threatens this perception of ingroup superiority. This threat causes ingroup members to treat such ingroup deviants harshly. The theoretical model that Marques et al. (2001) developed to explain the black sheep effect, based on the principles of social identity and self-categorization theories, is termed 'subjective group dynamics' (Figure 8.13).

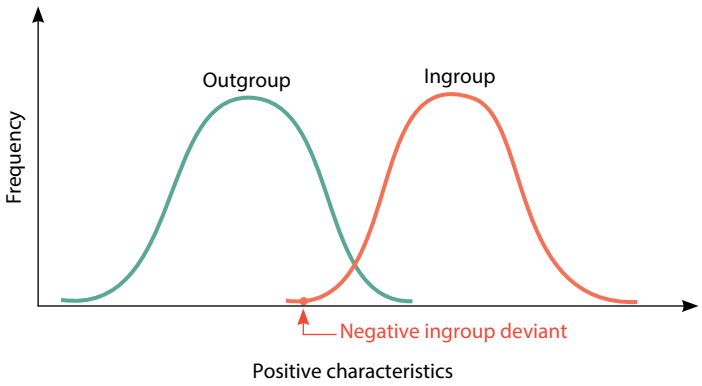


FIGURE 8.13 Subjective group dynamics model According to the subjective group dynamics model (Marques et al., 2001), ingroup members who flout the norms of desirable behaviour are derogated by the group because they threaten the perceived superiority of their group to the outgroup. This figure plots the number of people from the ingroup and outgroup who are perceived to possess a given level of positive characteristics. An ingroup member who does not live up to the perceived standards of the ingroup is effectively like an outgroup member, and so dilutes the perceived superiority of the ingroup.

Research generally supports the subjective group dynamics model. Marques et al. (2001) showed that when participants felt certain about the superiority of their group on the dimension in question, they did not derogate ingroup deviants any more than outgroup equivalents. Apparently, under these conditions, they did not find the ingroup deviant to be threatening to the positive image of the ingroup. Only when they felt uncertain about the superiority of the group – and thus found the ingroup deviant disturbed it – did they exhibit the black sheep effect. Abrams et al. (2007), in a study of British school children attending a summer school, provided further evidence of subjective group dynamics. Participants who were accountable to the ingroup – who thought their responses would be seen and discussed by other summer schools – were more likely to derogate deviant ingroup members and valorize ingroup members who followed the norms. One of the functions of the derogation of ingroup members, then, seems to be to ensure that ingroup members 'stay in line' by adhering to group norms, and that other ingroup members play their part in enforcing group norms.

This can sometimes be unfortunate for the group. Specifically, deviance from group norms can often be useful in pointing out things that are wrong within the group (Packer, 2008b; Packer & Chasteen, 2010). Indeed, deviants can be important to the group in bringing about positive social change and allowing the group to grow and change. In Chapter 9, you will read more about special cases of minorities holding different views from the majority who are able to make positive social changes. A good example of this from social psychological research comes from the body of work on the **intergroup sensitivity effect**. Hornsey, Oppes and Svensson (2002; see also Hornsey & Imani, 2004) have shown that people are more ready to accept criticism from within the group than from outside the group. Ingroup critics can be seen as 'deviant' members of the group because they are speaking ill of their own kind. However, because they are perceived to be constructive, at least compared to outgroup members, ingroup members agree with their comments more and believe that they are less threatening and harmful. Ingroup critics therefore have the potential to point out problems within the group so that the group can work on its mistakes and change for the better. Other research has shown that even people who do not belong to the group being criticized tend to object when it is criticized from outside: people from Britain, for example, object to New Zealanders criticizing Australians (Sutton, Elder & Douglas, 2006). Of course, in real-life situations, the ingroup critic may not find their task very easy. Voicing one's negative opinions about the group can be risky, especially if the group sees the critic as a deviant member.

Intergroup sensitivity effect The tendency to prefer criticism to come from within the group than from an outsider.

Sometimes, it may be necessary for the critic to find like-minded others and form a minority group within the group. As we will see in Chapter 9, minority groups often show great capacity to influence larger groups.

EXPLORING FURTHER

In the research on the black sheep effect, ingroup deviants are derogated and often shunned by the group. However, work on group criticism shows that ingroup critics' comments are accepted by the group with little or no sensitivity. Are these findings at odds with one another? Why/why not? Why do you think deviant group members are rejected in one paradigm but accepted in the other? Read more about the theoretical arguments underlying the black sheep effect and intergroup sensitivity effect to find out.

Impostors

We now know that group members often deal harshly with people who deviate from group norms. The need to protect the identity and integrity of the group is indeed powerful. There is another interesting case of deviant group membership we have not yet dealt with – occasionally members of a group 'pose' as legitimate group members when they are not. Instead, they fail to fulfil important criteria for group membership. How groups deal with these group members – called **impostors** – is a fairly new area of enquiry in social psychology. In the laboratory, several studies examined group members' reactions to people who pose as legitimate members of the group (Hornsey & Jetten, 2003; Jetten, Summerville, Hornsey & Mewse, 2005; Warner, Hornsey & Jetten, 2007).

Impostors People who threaten the group by fraudulently claiming to be members.

In one study, Jetten et al. (2005) presented Australian vegetarians (ingroup members) and meat eaters (outgroup members) with a person claiming to be a vegetarian, but caught eating meat. It was found that ingroup members were more displeased with the target than outgroup members. Ingroup members also derogated the target more than outgroup members. This impostor threatens the distinctiveness of the group by claiming to be a member and is, like deviant ingroup members, dealt with harshly. Indeed, the negative reactions towards the impostor were greatest when people perceived vegetarians and non-vegetarians to be highly distinctive groups. It also appears that vegetarians who 'eat meat occasionally' are harshly perceived by ingroup members (Hornsey & Jetten, 2003). In another study, Schoemann and Branscombe (2011) asked younger adults what they felt about an older adult target who was attempting to look younger. Participants read a description of a person who was (or was not) trying to 'pass' as younger and were asked to rate them on several dimensions such as likeability and deceitfulness. Following the logic of Jetten et al.'s research, it was predicted that participants would like an older adult attempting to look young less than an older adult who does not attempt to look young. This is exactly what they found (see Figure 8.14). Participants rated an older person trying to 'pass' as younger as less likeable and more deceitful than an older person not attempting to 'pass'. Similarly, North and Fiske (2013) found that younger people devalue older people when they do not 'act their age' (e.g., when they like current pop artists).

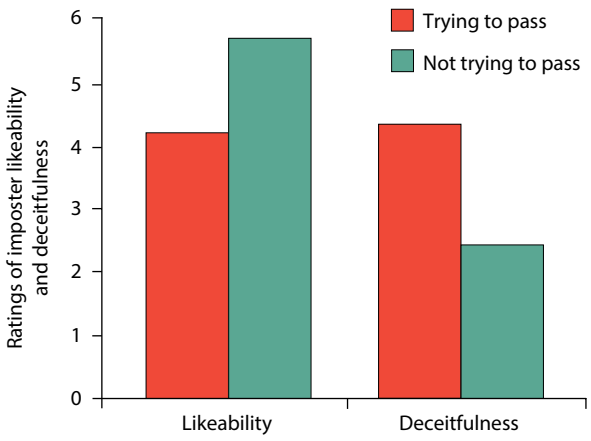


FIGURE 8.14 Perceptions of impostors within groups
Participants rated an older adult trying to 'pass' as younger to be less likeable and more deceitful than an older adult not attempting to 'pass'. This study demonstrates the general disdain for people who are seen as imposters to a group.

Source: Data from Schoemann and Branscombe (2011)

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Impostors within groups

In Australia, several cases of fraud have been uncovered where men living as war heroes were found to be impostors who had never engaged in active service. Sometimes, these men had never even been employed by the armed forces. One example has been presented of a man who masqueraded as a colonel and wore the Order of Australia and active service medals. He was, in fact, an accountant who never served in the army or went to war. He was convicted by a Sydney court of falsely posing as a returned soldier. Similarly, in the USA, a man was convicted of posing as a decorated Vietnam War veteran and was required to pay a fine. He was also asked to carry out community service. The man was convicted under the 2006 Stolen Valor Act – a federal law that makes it illegal to falsely claim war hero status and military decorations.

SUPERSTOCK

These examples demonstrate how strongly people can react to impostors who, like deviant group members, threaten the integrity and image of a valued group. Rachel Dolezal, whom we discussed at the beginning of the chapter, is another case of imposterism.

Questions

1. Think of examples of impostors from your own experience. Are there any specific groups, like war veterans, where imposterism is particularly frowned upon? What are the characteristics of these groups?
2. Are impostors always harmful to the group? Can you think of examples where impostors may actually help the group?
3. Why is it so important to us to protect the integrity of our groups?

Schism and subgroups

Sometimes, smaller factions within a group are a positive and necessary feature of group life, as we will see in the next section. Occasionally, a small number of ingroup members 'break off' and form a minority; when this occurs, we have what is known as a **schism**. More specifically, a schism occurs when the group divides into **subgroups** that differ in some crucial respect, such as having different attitudes or values. This sometimes happens in religious or political contexts and can result in extreme and destructive conflict for the larger group (Sani & Reicher, 1998, 2000). Also, in organizational contexts, mergers between companies can result in two subgroups coming together that differ and disagree on fundamental issues or values (Terry, Carey & Callan, 2001; Terry & O'Brien, 2001). Again, as we will see in Chapter 9, active minorities within a group can sometimes be valuable additions to the group that can exert positive social change.

Schism A group divides into subgroups that differ usually in terms of their attitudes or values.

Subgroups Smaller groups nested within a larger group.

Smaller groups within a large group can, of course, also occur without a schism. Natural subgroups occur in many groups simply because of the group's structure – thus companies are divided into different departments that have different functions to perform. One part of the company might be responsible for finance, one for production, one for human resources and so on. Also, within a national Olympic team, there are separate teams for swimming, gymnastics, athletics and so on. Even smaller and more specialized groups can exist within groups that are ultimately part of a larger group. For example, an Olympic team is made up

of the various different sporting groups but even within the sporting groups there are smaller divisions for specific purposes such as the 'track' athletes and the 'field' athletes. Further still, **cross-cutting categories** are subgroups that represent categories that have members outside the immediate larger group (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007). For example, a group of athletes may belong to a national Olympic team but also to an international association for athletics. Many groups have complex structures of nested groups and cross-cutting categories but nevertheless define themselves ultimately as one large group.

Cross-cutting categories
Subgroups that represent categories that have members outside the immediate larger group.

Subgroups can significantly influence the dynamics within the larger group. As we will see in Chapter 11, subgroups often engage in competition and conflict that can be harmful for the larger group. One obvious example is the conflict between the Catholic and Protestant groups in Northern Ireland (Hewstone, Cairns, Voci Hamberger & Niens, 2006). Intense conflict and rivalry between these subgroups contribute to extremely negative intergroup dynamics in society.

WHAT DO GROUPS DO FOR US?

Now that we know what groups are, how they are structured and how people 'fit in' to groups, we turn our attention to the functions of group membership. Here, we consider some of the reasons why people belong to groups, beginning with interdependence.

Interdependence

Groups allow people to achieve more and sometimes better things than individuals would be able to do on their own. At a simple level, some tasks depend upon people working interdependently and to get these tasks done, people join groups. For example, one person could not have built Stonehenge or the Great Wall of China. The task and outcome depended on the contributions of many people working together. Also, how groups do things is often quite different from how individuals perform tasks on their own. People are influenced by their interactions with other group members, causing them to form goals and

Photo by Frantisek Duris on Unsplash

behave differently than they would alone. In short, coordinated group action allows people to achieve things that would not be possible by an individual acting alone. Many social psychologists argue that interpersonal interdependence is the essential defining feature of groups (e.g., Rabbie & Horwitz, 1988; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). The human need to affiliate in order to achieve their goals has led some social psychologists to argue that a predisposition to identify with groups has evolved over history (Brewer & Caporeal, 2006; Tidwell, Eastwick & Kim, 2017).

Similarity, support and the need for affiliation

Others join groups when they find people who share their attitudes and opinions. For example, many political and activist groups centre around specific opinions or attitudes. In social psychology, these groups are often known as **opinion-based groups**. Membership of such groups can allow people to achieve the things they want to achieve. For example, Bliuc, McGarty, Reynolds and Muntele (2007) demonstrated that when people identify with opinion-based groups, they are more likely to display intentions for political action. A recent example is found in the transnational movement to support Syrian refugees (Thomas et al., 2018). For the groups we already belong to, such as our ethnic group, we share a wide range of customs, norms and beliefs. Thus, we tend to share a lot of important features of 'who we are' with members of our most important groups. Also, at an even more basic level, people tend to join together with, and have more liking for, people who are in close proximity with themselves (Festinger et al., 1950).

Opinion-based groups Groups that are formed around shared opinions.

From their group memberships, people can also receive social support. In times of hardship or stress, groups can provide a foundation for individuals and insulate them from the harmful effects of stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Indeed, people often actively seek support groups for their specific problems. One good example is Alcoholics Anonymous groups that provide people with social support and encouragement to beat alcohol addiction.

By being in groups people satisfy their basic need for affiliation and to belong. According to sociometer theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary & Baumeister, 2000), it is adaptive for people to be included in groups and build relationships with others because social inclusion enhances our self-esteem (see our review of sociometer theory in Chapter 2). In support of this view, Leary, Tambor, Terdal and Downs (1995) demonstrated that people's self-esteem was higher in situations where they felt themselves to be included than when they felt excluded (where levels of self-esteem were depressed). Leary et al. argue that self-esteem is therefore a measure of the effectiveness of our social relationships. If self-esteem is high, this means that our group memberships are stable; but if it is low, we seek ways to improve it such as attempting to improve our inclusion in groups. Ultimately, we do not want to be excluded from desirable groups, or be left to feel lonely, so we attempt to 'repair' our group memberships to enhance our personal self-esteem.

Terror management

Another social psychological reason for people to affiliate with others derives from **terror management theory** (Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon, 1986; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt & Schimel, 2004). According to this theory, human awareness of the inevitability of one's own death (mortality salience) creates a continuous source of 'existential anguish'. People therefore attempt to reduce this terror by organizing,

Terror management theory Theory proposing that human awareness of death creates a constant source of 'existential anguish' that must be dealt with.

structuring and giving meaning to their lives. They can do this in a variety of ways, as we discussed in Chapter 2, and the central mechanism for managing this terror of death appears to be one's self-esteem. According to this account, joining with others and being in groups raises one's self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. Our views are validated and our anxiety about death is reduced. In short, we feel good (and sometimes even immortal) when we affiliate with others and this helps us manage the idea, always in the back of our minds, that our lives are finite.

Greenberg et al. (1990) demonstrated how this makes us feel about people in general. They found that when people are reminded of their own death, their feelings of attraction to people to consensually validate their own beliefs increases and their attraction to those who threaten their beliefs decreases. Thus, mortality salience may not only enhance our desire to affiliate and join groups but may also mean that we develop a strong preference for our own groups and, in particular, our larger 'ideological' groups (Hogg, Hohman & Rivera, 2008). This may also have implications for how ingroup members deal with deviants who do not uphold the values of the group. It may also influence how we feel about other groups, therefore having implications for ingroup favouritism, prejudice and intolerance. We discuss some of these aspects in more detail in Chapter 11 on intergroup relations.

Social identity The aspect of our self/identity that is determined by our group memberships.

Social identity theory The theory of group membership and intergroup relations arguing that personal identities and group memberships complete people's sense of self.

Research by Wisman and Koole (2003) highlights quite another response to mortality salience. Students from two Dutch universities were exposed to a standard manipulation of mortality salience, being asked to describe the emotions they feel when thinking about their own death, and what happens to them when they physically die. In the control group, participants were asked much the same questions about watching TV, with no mention of mortality. After this manipulation, students were invited to take a seat, and told that other students were about to join them in a discussion group. These (fictional) students did not necessarily share participants' own worldview: half the participants were told that the other students opposed Dutch values such as tolerance and democracy. Regardless of whether participants believed other students opposed or supported their own worldviews, participants were more likely to sit in a clustered chair, rather than an isolated chair, following the mortality salience manipulation (see Figure 8.15). Thus, it would seem that under threat of mortality, people do not want to be alone; they prefer company. As we have seen, groups provide us not only with a shared worldview, but also satisfy our deep human need to belong. As we shall see in Chapter 11, one of the functions of a shared worldview may be precisely to satisfy our need to belong, since it provides us with a common understanding of the world within which we can relate to each other. Wisman and Koole's (2003) findings suggest that when the two needs are placed in conflict, the need to belong may sometimes actually override the need to validate our worldviews.

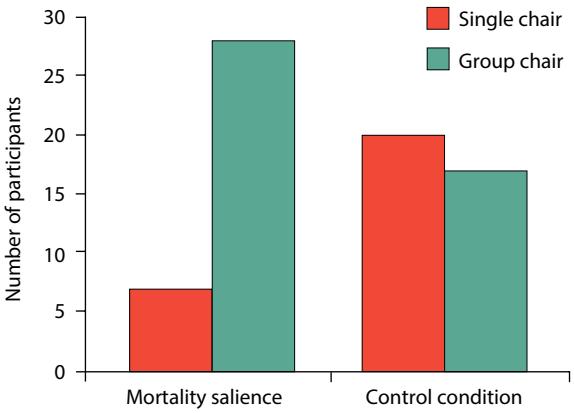


FIGURE 8.15 Mortality salience and the need to belong This shows the number of participants choosing to sit with other participants (group chair) or by themselves (single chair) under mortality salience vs. control conditions. These effects were the same regardless of whether participants were led to believe that other members of their discussion group opposed or supported their worldview.

Source: Wisman and Koole (2003). Copyright © 2003 by American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

The need for social identity

Another function that groups perform is to provide us with a **social identity**. According to **social identity theory** (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes Reicher & Wetherall., 1987), there are two broader types of identities that make up the self. These are one's

personal identity (defined by one's personal characteristics and relationships) and one's social identity (defined by one's group memberships). While personal identity is associated with our own personal behaviour and close personal relationships, social identity is associated with our behaviour within (and between) groups. As we saw in Chapter 2 our personal identity is important to our self-concept. However, our social identities are also important to us. For example, we often label ourselves and identify strongly with our national groups, our peer groups and our sporting groups. Therefore, according to this perspective, we need to be part of groups to complete our definition of who we are. In different circumstances, we see ourselves in terms of our personal and social identities to the extent that one is more salient than the other. For example, in a meeting on gender relations in the workplace, we might be more likely to consider ourselves as a man or a woman, but when watching an international football match, we might be strongly aware of our national identity.

We identify groups as 'fuzzy' sets of characteristics and attributes that define what one group is and differentiate it from other groups. We can do this in many different ways, perhaps by first grouping people together in terms of familiar categories that we use regularly (e.g., based on what people look like, how they behave) and then more complex ways if familiar and readily accessible categories do not work. Once we have worked out a category, we then recognize additional information about the category that we 'store' as a **prototype**. This prototype describes the group's characteristics but also determines how people within the group are expected to behave and think. The process of identifying with a group involves **self-categorization** of oneself as a group member (Turner et al., 1987). Once we do this, we see ourselves as group members whose attitudes, feelings and behaviours are driven by the group. In other words, our perception of ourselves becomes depersonalized and we consider ourselves through the perspective of the group prototype and its associated behaviours and attitudes. It has been argued that categorization as a group member is a precondition for determining group membership itself and that interdependence is a product of the process of social categorization (Platow, Grace & Smithson, 2012). Social categorization is also argued to be a necessary precondition for any affective feelings that go with group membership (McGarty, 1999).

Prototype
'Fuzzy' sets of characteristics that define a group and distinguish it from other groups.

Self-categorization
Cognitive process of categorizing oneself as a group member.

The content of the prototype also determines how we feel about ourselves personally. When we identify with a group, we identify with the characteristics of that group, including its values, prestige and status. It is therefore in our interests to categorize ourselves as members of esteemed groups because if our self-concept derives in part from our social identities, then so too may our self-esteem (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Long & Spears, 1997). We will all be able to remember times when we felt good about our favourite sports team winning a major competition – being associated with positively valued groups makes us feel good. It is also in our interests to protect or enhance the esteem of the groups we belong to and cannot leave (e.g., our gender or ethnicity). In general, we need to feel good about ourselves and one way to do this is to feel good about the groups we belong to. As we will see in Chapter 11, people's motivation to derive positive self-esteem from being members of groups is an important factor in determining ingroup favouritism. Showing a preference for the ingroup is a way of feeling good about the group and also a way of feeling good about the self. For example, it has been found that people who are given the opportunity to discriminate against an outgroup show higher levels of self-esteem (Lemyre & Smith, 1985). In summary, groups are self-defining and determine important aspects of our self-concept. Social identity is implicated in a wide range of social psychological phenomena and so we will revisit social identity theory many times throughout this book.

Reducing uncertainty

Subjective uncertainty Uncertainty about who we are and what we are supposed to do, which is alleviated by identification with groups.

A related idea about what groups can do for us also derives from social identity theory. This argument proposes that group membership delivers people from a state of **subjective uncertainty**. Too much uncertainty about who we are and what we are supposed to do can feel uncomfortable (Hogg et al., 2008). Because identifying with groups tells us a lot about who we are and how we are supposed to behave, group memberships remove a lot of uncertainty from our everyday lives (Hogg, 2007). We then know how to behave and we can also predict how people are likely to behave towards us.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Below is a commonly used scale of group identification adapted from Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade and Williams (1986). The name of the group (in this case 'university students') is altered depending on the group membership of interest. Complete the scale for yourself and examine your level of identification with university students. Also, substitute another group membership in place of 'university students' and repeat the scale. How does your level of identification change with the nature of the group?

I identify with other university students.
not at all 1 2 3 4 5 very much

I am a worthy member of the university student community.
not at all 1 2 3 4 5 very much

In general, being a university student has little to do with the way I see myself.
not at all 1 2 3 4 5 very much

The fact that I am a university student is an important part of who I am.
not at all 1 2 3 4 5 very much

In general, I am pleased that I am a university student.
not at all 1 2 3 4 5 very much

Source: Adapted from Brown et al. (1986). Copyright © 2009 by John Wiley Sons, Inc. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Other scales of identification exist. Some are rather long, and distinguish between different aspects of social identification (e.g., solidarity with other group members, how central the group identification is to one's self-concept, and how much one sees ingroup members as similar to each other, and others: see Leach et al., 2008). On the other hand, Postmes, Haslam and Jans (2013) show that a single-item measure of social identification is just about as useful in capturing the psychological process of identification and predicting its outcomes. This item is simply 'I identify with my group' and participants respond on a 7-point scale ranging from 'fully disagree' to 'fully agree'.

Optimal distinctiveness

Optimal distinctiveness People like to feel unique as individuals but at the same time they feel the need to affiliate with others. This leads them to seek the optimal balance between these needs.

Identifying with groups can make people feel positive about themselves even when the groups do not help relieve uncertainty. Also, the groups do not have to be positive. This is partly because we do not just want to achieve a positive view of ourselves, but also a clear, coherent view of ourselves as a person who is distinct from others (e.g., see self-concept clarity in Chapter 2). The idea of **optimal distinctiveness** is that people generally like to distinguish themselves from others and see themselves as unique individuals. At the same time, they also feel the need to affiliate with others. Group membership helps people meet both these needs. People can distinguish themselves from others who belong to different groups, and they are

also connected or affiliated with others who are similar to themselves (Brewer, 1991). Finding this optimal distinctiveness satisfies two fundamental needs.

Following optimal distinctiveness theory and deriving ideas from social identity theory, Hornsey and Jetten (2004) identified eight strategies that people can adopt in order to meet the balance between the need to be different and the need to belong:

1. Identify with a numerically distinct group: small groups tend to command more loyalty because they satisfy the need for belonging and affiliation/inclusion without sacrificing a person's sense of distinctiveness. This is the basic argument formed from optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991, 1993; Brewer & Weber, 1994). The assumption here is that smaller groups (e.g., minority political parties, smaller work groups) will offer more distinctiveness than larger groups but still satisfy people's need to belong.
2. Identify with a subgroup: sometimes we identify with subgroups and subcategories in order to achieve numerical distinctiveness. For example, political parties often contain formalized subgroups or factions that reflect different opinions or ideologies within the overarching ethos of the party (e.g., moderate and hardline Republican groups in the USA).
3. Identify with a 'non-mainstream' group: some groups pride themselves on being 'different' from the mainstream group. People can join these types of groups to maintain their sense of belonging to a group while keeping their distinctiveness from other groups. An example of this might be the punk movement in the 1970s. People looked different, behaved differently and had different attitudes from the mainstream – even though they shared these things in common (so in some ways they were less distinctive than they thought), they still maintained their distinctiveness from the mainstream.
4. Enhance the distinctiveness of one's group: people can maintain the distinctiveness of the group by perceptually enhancing the group's distinctiveness. This strategy draws on social identity theory and the notion that people are motivated to accentuate the similarities within their group and the differences between their group and other groups (Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963; Turner et al., 1987).
5. Differentiate oneself within a group through roles: people can achieve distinctiveness within a group by adopting a specific role. Having a specific role within a group (e.g., mother in a family, IT specialist in a small company) means that the need for distinctiveness is met while the person still feels that they belong in a group.
6. Identify with a group that prescribes individualism: many groups are characterized by norms of individualism and independence (e.g., national groups such as being British). In this case, what it means to conform to the group's norms is changed, so that the conformity essentially becomes an expression of distinctiveness or differentiation (Hornsey et al., 2006).
7. See oneself as loyal but not conformist: using this strategy, people rationalize their own conformist behaviour. Instead of seeing one's behaviour as conformist, it is possible to see the behaviour as the actions of a loyal group member. In doing so, they feel part of the group but also maintain their need to be independent (Hornsey & Jetten, 2005).
8. See oneself as more normative than other group members: people show a general tendency to consider themselves to be more normative or typical than other group members. For example, when cooperativeness is considered to be group normative, people see themselves as more cooperative than other group members (Codol, 1975, 1984). This bias reflects an attempt to maintain the unique self while still being a part of a group and behaving in a manner that is socially acceptable to the group.

Spears, Ellemers and Doosje (2009) demonstrated another process that helps people balance their need for distinctiveness with their need for connection with others. They showed that people tend to like a majority to share their ideological opinions (e.g., on the importance of the

environment), but prefer to be a member of a minority with respect to matters of taste, such as preferences for TV channels. Thus, sharing one's opinions with others helps people to feel they belong and have social support, but sharing tastes with a smaller number of others helps people to maintain an optimal level of distinctiveness from others.

TIME TO REFLECT

Again, think of a social group that you belong to. What is your primary reason for being a part of it? Does it satisfy certain psychological needs for you?

Ostracism and social exclusion

Social ostracism
Being excluded from a group by the consensus of the group.

So far we have discussed mostly positive aspects of group life. However, another significant drive to our need for groups is that we simply do not want to be left out. When we are not part of a desired group, we feel lonely, are deprived of social interaction, miss out on achieving important goals, lose a sense of how we should behave and of who we are. Social psychological research on **social ostracism** demonstrates some of the negative consequences we suffer when we are left out of groups.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Many US high school comedies and dramas depict the phenomenon of 'cliques' and how being left out of cliques and ostracized by particular groups can be painful. Some well-known examples are *Mean Girls* (2004), *Never Been Kissed* (1999), *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) and *American Pie* (1999).

In a significant body of research, Kip Williams and colleagues have investigated the many ways in which social ostracism can affect people (Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2007; Smith & Williams, 2004; Williams, 2009; Williams, Cheung & Choi, 2000; Williams et al., 2002; Williams & Sommer, 1997; Zadro, Williams & Richardson, 2004). Many of these studies have used a unique computer program (the Cyberball program) to simulate a ball-tossing game. In a typical experiment, a person sits behind a computer where they believe themselves to be playing a ball-tossing game with two other participants. In fact, these supposed other participants are not 'real' participants but are created by the program. The participant starts playing the game and at first the ball throwing is equitable – everyone has the ball thrown to them an equal number of times. However, after a few trials, the experiment changes and participants might find themselves in a condition where they are no longer thrown the ball. In this condition, they are ostensibly being ostracized from the game by the other two participants. How does this make them feel?

Results of many studies show that people who are ostracized, even in this minimal way, feel less happy, less in control, less good about themselves, and that life has less meaning; they also suffer quite marked deficits in cognitive performance (for a review, see Wesselmann & Williams, 2017, who call ostracism 'social death'). Since groups satisfy our fundamental need to belong, being excluded from groups thwarts this need, with many knock-on consequences. Interestingly, ostracism seems to hurt even when it comes from a despised outgroup. For example, Gonsalkorale and Williams (2007) showed that people felt the negative effects of social ostracism even when people who were supposedly members of the Ku Klux Klan would not involve them in the Cyberball game. Furthermore, like being ostracized, ostracizing others

also tends to lower people's sense of belonging – but less so if they are ostracizing for punitive reasons (the ostracized person did something wrong), and they also experience increases, rather than decreases, in their sense of control (Nezlek, Wesselmann, Wheeler & Williams, 2015).

If ostracism hurts the person ostracized and the people doing the ostracizing, why does it happen? Wesselman, Wirth, Pryor, Reeder and Williams (2013) found that participants in a Cyberball game tended to ostracize a player only if they were a burden to the group. In this case, the 'player' was a computer program that was programmed to take an uncomfortably long time (16 seconds, as opposed to the normal 3–5 seconds) to throw the ball to the next player. When this fictional player was ostracized for no apparent reason, participants tried to reinclude them (e.g., by making an effort to toss the ball to them). Thus, it seems that ostracism is something normally performed reluctantly, and only when a person is a burden to the group. This pattern of behaviour has probably existed for a long time, since early humans might have been tempted to exclude people who threatened the survival of the group by being too slow or incompetent, or who carried infectious diseases (Kurzban & Leary, 2001; Schaller & Duncan, 2007). The threat of exclusion is also enough to motivate group members to follow group norms (Ouwerkerk, Kerr, Gallucci & van Lange, 2005). In two studies, Kerr et al. (2009) showed that the threat of ostracism was effective in stopping people following the example of selfish group members, so long as groups were not too large and that only a minority of people in the group acted selfishly.

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Ethical considerations in ostracism research

Research on ostracism demonstrates that there are some seriously negative consequences suffered by people who are left out of groups. Carrying out ostracism work in the laboratory does, however, present some thorny issues. If people feel so bad about being ostracized, how do researchers ensure that the effects of the experiment are not long-lasting?

Given the variables that ostracism researchers study (e.g., mood, self-esteem), it is important to ensure that people return to a normal state after participating in the experiment. Researchers make this happen by using the procedure of informed consent and following ethical guidelines for working with human participants. At the beginning of an experiment, research participants would be informed about the types of questions they will answer so that they know what they are going to do. Most importantly, however, at the conclusion of the experiment, research participants would be fully debriefed about the purpose of the experiment. In the studies on ostracism, participants would have been informed about the nature of the study and that the experimenters were manipulating feelings of ostracism. Participants would also have been told that they were not really being ostracized by other people. In some studies (e.g., Zadro et al., 2004), participants were given the opportunity to discuss their experiences in the experiment. By following these types of procedures, experimenters ensure that participants do not leave the experiment with any ill effects from having participated in the research.

Questions

1. Can you think of any other ethical issues presented by ostracism research? How would you deal with them?
2. How much do you think laboratory experiments on ostracism can tell us about the effects of long-term ostracism that people experience in their everyday lives?

Furthermore, ostracism has also been found to cause us physical pain. In a study where participants played the Cyberball game while lying in an MRI scanner, Eisenberger, Lieberman and Williams (2003) showed that the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex – a region of the brain activated when physical pain is experienced – was activated during Cyberball ostracism. Further, activation of this brain region was significantly related to later self-reports

Getty Images/Steve Debenport

FIGURE 8.16 Ostracism Being left out is painful.

of psychological distress. These studies demonstrate that the psychological pain people experience when they are ostracized is closely related to real physical pain. MacDonald and Leary (2005) offer a theoretical perspective concerning the pain of social exclusion and argue that social exclusion is perceived as painful because the way people react to rejection is directly influenced by aspects of the physical pain system (for some recent neuroscientific evidence, see Heeren et al., 2017). Bernstein and Claypool (2012) examined the effects of social exclusion on subsequent sensitivity to physical pain. They found that severe forms of social exclusion (e.g., being told that you face a future of stark aloneness) tended to numb people from physical pain, while moderate forms of social exclusion (e.g., from a Cyberball game) lead to increased sensitivity to pain. This suggests that pain sensitivity plays a functional role. To cope with profound aloneness, it may make sense to be impervious to pain. To cope with merely the prospect that one might be alone, it may make sense to be acutely sensitive to further painful signals – so that one can respond to signs of potential ostracism and try to avert that fate.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Williams and his colleagues' research is intriguing because it shows that people feel bad even when they are ostracized in the most minimal of senses (e.g., by a computer) and by groups they hate (e.g., the KKK). Why do you think that this 'cold shoulder' is so powerful? What psychological needs are not being met when we are ostracized and why does it not matter who/how ostracism occurs? Take a closer look at the research on social ostracism and map out some of the reasons why it is so powerful.

Culture and identity

Thus far we have been asking what groups mean to people, and people identify groups, without considering whether this might depend on people's cultural background. Yuki (2003) investigated exactly this question by asking North American and Japanese students how much they identified with, and felt loyal to, the national group, and to the small groups, like social clubs, to which they belonged. Yuki also asked students how about their sociometric knowledge of both groups – including their personal knowledge of the different personalities of people in the group, of who knows who and who likes who within the group. Perhaps unsurprisingly, students from both countries identified more strongly with, and felt more loyal to, their small groups if they felt they had good sociometric knowledge. However, when it came to national groups, this pattern only held for the Japanese students. Apparently, in Japanese culture, loyalty and attachment even to large groups depends on the perception that one is personally embedded in a network of relationships. Yuki (2003) argued that this arises from cultural differences in individualism and collectivism (see Chapter 2). In individualistic cultures, groups serve as psychological categories to which people can see themselves belonging to independently of their personal relationships with others. In collectivistic cultures, even large groups may be experienced as networks of people in close and interdependent relationships. This feeling of being embedded in a network of people, rather than belonging to a category, may inspire loyalty and identification.

The interdependence of people within and between groups can also shape culture itself. This can be seen in the distinction between traditional farmer and herder communities (Barry, Child & Bacon, 1959; Berry, 1967; Edgerton, 1965). In farmer cultures, people are tied to the land they farm and depend heavily on people in their community to collaborate on tasks such as sowing, harvesting, and trading. In contrast, herders look after herds of animals which often roam from place to place over large areas, and so are typically less tied to a local place or community. Their livelihoods also depend much less on close collaboration with their neighbours. Rather, they regularly interact with strangers, buying from and selling to them.

This farmer-herder distinction suggests that there is more to cultural difference than the simple distinction between individualism and collectivism. Rather, cultures can be characterized according to whether people depend almost exclusively on people within the group, or on people outside the group. Indeed, compared to herders, farmers place higher value on conformity, consultation and collective action (Barry et al., 1959; Berry, 1967; Edgerton, 1965). This cultural difference can also affect basic patterns of thinking and perception. Specifically, farmers are also more likely to perceive objects holistically as part of a surrounding stimulus field, whereas herders are more likely to perceive objects as separate from a stimulus field (Uskul, Kitayama & Nisbett, 2008).

Since farmers are more dependent on strangers than herders, it also makes sense that they are relatively more affected when strangers ostracize them. Uskul and Over (2014) studied a farming community (tea growers) and a community of herders (mostly of cattle and sheep) in northeastern Turkey. Whether asked to recall a time that they had been socially excluded by strangers, or presented with a fictional vignette in which a stranger ostracized them, herders reported being more affected than farmers by the ostracism. Although farmers depend on people they know more than herders, there were no differences between the two groups in responses to ostracism by familiar people. Presumably people in both cultures depend sufficiently on familiar people for ostracism to represent a serious threat to them. This work therefore highlights how culture shapes people's interdependence on each other. It also shows how the critical ingredient in shaping how people respond to ostracism may be whether people feel they depend on those by whom they are ostracized. Normally, we depend on people whom we know, or who belong in the same social groups as ourselves, but this is truer in some cultures than in others.

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Check out the Student Project on page 656 by Megan Hunt from Canterbury Christ Church University. Using interviews, Megan studied how British Muslim women experience their dual identity. She also explored the women's experiences of discrimination. Her qualitative research is relevant to the study of identity covered in this chapter, and also research on prejudice and intergroup relations in Chapter 11.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have explored why groups are so important to people. We have explained how and why groups form and what they mean to individuals who belong to them. We have also discussed how the norms or 'rules' of group behaviour develop, and the consequences of violating group norms. We have also outlined some of the negative aspects of group membership, such as when groups break up and the negative consequences for people who are left out of groups. Specifically, you will have learned that:

- There are many different definitions of a group. However, it is generally agreed that the minimum requirement for a group to exist is that people perceive themselves to be part of the group. However, we have also argued that groups can only really exist if they can be compared to other groups. So, with a sense of 'us-ness' (our ingroups) there must also be a sense of 'them-ness' (our outgroups).
- There are many different types of groups and groups vary on several dimensions, such as being big, small, structured and unstructured. They may be cohesive or 'bound together' as a unit, or they may not. They may form differently – some groups may be a part of our self from birth (e.g., our ethnicity) or we may join a group to get a specific task done. These latter groups are said to go through stages of development or socialization over time so that they achieve maximum effectiveness. However, despite these differences between groups, a common feature of groups is that they determine important features of our selves. Our groups determine who we are, how we behave and our attitudes and beliefs.
- One key feature of groups is that they almost always have a set of rules or norms that specify how group members are supposed to be behave. These may be implicit or explicit. They may be enforced or not enforced. Either way, norms are strong determinants of our behaviours. They can also influence or even change what we think.
- In addition to social norms, groups often have well-defined social roles or shared expectations of how particular individuals in the group are supposed to behave. Like norms, these are powerful determinants of our behaviour. Sometimes, roles are good for the group – they keep people focused on the task and a division of labour is established that helps the group function to its potential. However, sometimes people can be 'locked' inside a role and its rigid behaviour, which can have negative consequences and cause us conflict.
- We have also discussed what happens to people when they do not quite fit into groups. Deviant or marginal group members who stray too far from group norms are often disliked and shunned by the group. These people can become 'black sheep', who are disliked more by their own groups even than outgroup members. Likewise, impostors who illegitimately claim ingroup status are rejected and spurned by the group. Sometimes, however, breakoff groups can emerge via a process of schism, or natural subgroups can exist effectively under the umbrella of a larger group.
- Finally, we discussed what groups do for us. First, groups help us to achieve things that we would struggle to achieve without others – interdependence is often a key to success. People also join or

identify with groups to satisfy their needs for social support and affiliation. Group memberships are also helpful to us in coping with the inevitability of our own death. Groups provide us with a social identity. They also help us balance our need to be distinctive or different with our basic human need to belong. As we saw from the research on ostracism, being excluded from groups, and therefore being deprived of the opportunity to fulfil those needs, can have negative social and even physical consequences. In short, it is clear that people need groups to satisfy some basic needs.

Our concern in this chapter has been on the nature of the group and the relationship between the individual and the group. In Chapter 9, we turn to the study of how groups are able to exert influence on the behaviour of the individuals who belong to them. How do people respond to influence from their groups? How can groups change the attitudes and behaviours of their members?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. How do people react to initiation rites and what social psychological process(es) can account for these reactions?
2. How do people react to 'imposters' within groups and why? Refer to social psychological research in your answer.
3. Does it adversely affect people to be excluded from groups that they do not even want to be part of? Why, or why not? In your answer, review research on the psychological effects of ostracism.

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Multiple social identities and coping

In this chapter, we have seen how belonging to, and identifying with, groups helps us meet several needs – the need for self-esteem, to belong, and yet to be distinctive. Groups also provide us with opportunities for successful social interaction, by helping put us in contact with other people with whom we have a shared identity and a shared set of values and understandings. Traditionally, social identity theory (and self-categorization theory) have been concerned with simple identities – what happens to us as a result of belonging to a single group? For the first two or three decades of research in this tradition, researchers paid little attention to the fact that each person belongs to multiple social groups. Indeed, the theories tended to assume that, psychologically speaking, only one group membership can be prominent in our minds at any given time. This claim, known as *functional antagonism,* holds that being aware of one group membership tends to suppress awareness of the other groups to which one belongs (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarty, 1994; for an accessible review, see Hornsey, 2008). Thus, in a given moment, our social world is reduced to the people, history, norms, values and traits of the ingroup versus the outgroup. However, over time, this claim became less plausible, and increasingly out of touch with several meaningful and important effects that were emerging in the study of social identity and intergroup relations. For example, as we shall see in Chapter 12, one of the most promising and often-tested methods of reducing prejudice involves making people aware of more than one group identity. On balance, intergroup relations appear to be improved when people see themselves as having a multifaceted, complex social identity.

A line of research explores the importance of having multiple social identities on our ability to cope with stress and illness. The theoretical idea behind this research is that since it boosts the clarity and value of our self-concept, social identity is a psychological resource that boosts our resilience in the face of stress and adversity. In a longitudinal study, Iyer, Jetten, Tsivrikos, Postmes and Haslam (2009) found that British students coped better with the transition to university when they started out with more social identities – when they could recount, in other words, a higher number of groups to which they belonged. In a study of patients at a hospital

in Devon, Jones et al. (2012) found that patients were less likely to develop post-traumatic stress symptoms after a brain injury if they formed new group memberships at the time of their injury.

While these studies are longitudinal, and therefore are able to suggest that multiple social identities lead to improved coping rather than the other way around, it is always desirable to run experiments to gain a more convincing picture of cause and effect relationships. This was precisely the aim of Jones and Jetten (2011), who asked Australian students to categorize themselves in terms of one, three or five social group memberships. They were then asked to do the cold pressor task – to submerge their nondominant hand in a bucket of ice-cold water and keep it in there for as long as they could stand it. By the way, this task hurts. And it is not to be tried at home, since there is a risk of injury if not professionally conducted and supervised (Mitchell, MacDonald & Brodie, 2004). Results showed that participants in the latter group, who defined themselves in terms of five group membership, were able to keep their hands in water for roughly twice as long (44.5 seconds) as those who had defined themselves in terms of one group membership (22.9 seconds). The experimental findings offer striking support for the idea that being aware of our multiple social identities helps us to cope with life's challenges. These are clearly important results from the point of view of the theory of social identity and its application to wellbeing.

1. Imagine that you work for a school or university facing severe budget cuts. It is proposed that funding for social and club activities should be cut, since this is less important than the core academic curriculum. Using the findings described above, write an argument for the value of the social and club activities of your school/university (max. 300 words).

2. In a major study (Barber, Eccles & Stone, 2001; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Eccles, Barber, Stone & Hunt, 2003), it was found that children who were involved in team sports tended to go on to like school more, gain higher grades in their final year of school, attend university, stay at university for longer, and then get a job that gave them autonomy and a meaningful career path. (On the risky flipside, they tended to binge drink more, no doubt because of the drinking culture often associated with team sports.) On the basis of the studies you have read about in this chapter, do you think these benefits would apply, to the same extent, for individual sports or other extracurricular activities? Finally, how do you think team sports might be beneficial to wellbeing, leaving aside the fact that belonging to a team gives you an additional social identity? In other words, how else might team sports boost your wellbeing?

3. Jones and Jetten (2011) note that apart from providing us with social identity, groups do us good in other ways. For example, many groups provide friendship networks and social support. Jones and Jetten (2011) were interested in the 'mere salience of an increasing number of groups' (p. 242), rather than these additional benefits. Thus, they deliberately asked people to categorize themselves in terms of memberships of social categories, rather than list the friendship, family and other more intimate social groups that they belong to. But going further, if their argument is right – and belonging to many groups gives us a purely existential identity boost that is independent of other benefits that groups bring – then we would expect variables such as 'self-evaluations, and/or self-knowledge' (p. 243) to mediate their effects. That is, listing a higher number of groups helps us cope because it increases variables such as self-esteem and self-concept clarity (see Chapter 2). However, Jones and Jetten (2011) did not test for this pattern of mediation. So, it remains unclear why awareness of multiple group membership is a boon to coping. If you were replicating their study, but wanted to measure variables that might mediate their effects, what would you measure? As well as self-esteem and self-concept clarity, what variables might you include? Can you find measures of perceived social support, for example, and perceived social inclusion? In no more than 400 words, describe your study.

4. There was no control condition in Jones and Jetten's (2011) study; that is, no group of participants just did the cold pressor task without first having answered any questions about their social identity. Does this matter? Do we know, for example, whether listing five group memberships really boosts resilience to levels that are higher than normal, or whether listing just one group membership might actually reduce resilience?

5. Since the publication of the early studies on the benefits of identification with groups (e.g., Jones & Jetten, 2011), there have been several studies producing similar effects. For example, Greenaway, Haslam, Cruwys, Branscombe & Ysseldyk (2015) showed that identifying strongly with a single social group is related to wellbeing, partly because it increases the feeling that one has control over life events. In 2017, a special issue of the *European Journal of Social Psychology* on the benefits (and sometimes costs) of social identification was edited by Jetten et al. (2017). Read the table of contents and the issue more widely for an overview of how the research has developed.

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources, including videos and self-test multiple choice questions, to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

Brown, R.J. (2000). *Group processes* (2nd edn). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. Covers a wide range of issues in the study of group processes, including detailed coverage of the nature of groups.

Hogg, M.A. & Tindale, R.S. (Eds.). (2001). *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Group processes*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. Collection of chapters by leading scholars in the field. Relevant to this chapter, it contains chapters on social categorization, group socialization, norms and status.

Levine, J.M. (Ed.). (2012). *Group processes*. New York: Psychology Press. Brings together chapters from experts in the field who provide a comprehensive outline of classic and contemporary research on phenomena related to social group membership.

Levine, J.M., & Moreland, R.L. (Eds.). (2006). *Small groups*. New York: Psychology Press. Collection of key articles that have been published on the social psychology of groups. Prefaced by a discussion of what a group is, the history of group research and how group research is done.

Williams, K.D., & Nida, S.A. (Eds.) (2017). *Ostracism, exclusion, and rejection*. London: Routledge. A collection of chapters on ostracism, rejection, and social exclusion, by experts in the field. Chapters explore the short- and long-term consequences for people who are ignored or excluded in a variety of contexts.

CHAPTER

9 SOCIAL INFLUENCE

In this chapter, you will learn about social influence – the effect that others have on our thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Through an analysis of classic research, you will learn how people respond to social influence in different ways depending on their own personal characteristics and the characteristics of the situation. You will learn about the ways in which people resist social influence, and how minorities are able to influence majorities. By the end of the chapter, you will have a comprehensive understanding of this core topic in social psychology.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Classic studies of social influence
- When are people influenced?
- Why are people influenced?
- Who is influenced?
- Resisting social influence
- Majority and minority social influence

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No doubt in your recreational reading, watching TV or chatting with your friends, you have come across a tale or two about **social influence** – the effect that others have on our thoughts, feelings and behaviours. There is a good chance that some of these tales were cautionary, for example about the evils of peer pressure or the perils of falling in with 'the wrong crowd'. People in Western countries are accustomed to seeing social influence as a bad thing, partly because of the value they place on individuals' freedom and autonomy (McAuliffe, Jetten, Hornsey and Hogg, 2003; Kim, Baek, Yoon, Oh & Choi, 2017). Indeed, social influence is clearly capable of leading people to harm themselves or others. This is one reason why academics, policy makers and law enforcers have recently become interested in **radicalization**, a special type of social influence in which people are encouraged to strike out at a society they are led to believe is fundamentally wrong or immoral (e.g., Doosje et al., 2016; Ryan, 2007).

Social influence The effects that other people can have on our thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Radicalization Type of social influence where people are encouraged to strike out at a society that they are led to believe is fundamentally wrong or immoral.

Although social influence can be harmful, it is easy to think of any number of cases in which social influence is beneficial. Through social influence processes such as conformity, compliance and obedience, human beings adhere to social norms that make peaceful coexistence and cooperation possible (see Chapter 8). Imagine what the drive to university or work would be like if everybody completely ignored the rules of the road, or getting your lunch at a busy cafeteria if no one had any respect for queues. One of the reasons these social norms are adhered to is that people enforce them. People are inclined to criticize and punish those whom they see violating the norms of the group (e.g., Marques, Yzerbyt & Leyens, 1988; Rucker, Polifronti, Tetlock and Scott, 2004; Wang & Murnighan, 2017). It is no coincidence therefore that many violent crimes occur in places that cannot be surveilled by members of the public, such as poorly lit streets, large crowds and, indeed, private homes.

Conformity is the most widely studied and general form of social influence. **Conformity** is defined as the convergence of one's thoughts, feelings and behaviours with an external standard. One form of conformity is **compliance**, where people do as they are *asked* and as they are *required* to act by formal regulations. For example, everyone tends to pay their taxes.

Conformity The convergence of one's thoughts, feelings and behaviours with an external standard.

Compliance The process of doing as one is asked or as one is required by regulations.

Another type of conformity is **obedience**, where people do as they are *told* by a powerful or authoritative figure. For example, children tend to do things when instructed to do so by their parents. However, conformity is possible when no one is around to ask or tell you what to do, to give you orders or scrutinize what you are doing. Specifically, people often conform to norms, which allow others to influence them even when those others are not present in the here and now. Most important are the **injunctive norms** of the group – the norms that are perceived as being approved of by other people. These norms prescribe what we should do and proscribe what we should not do (see Chapter 8).

Obedience The process of doing as one is told by an authority figure.

Injunctive norms Norms that are perceived as being approved of by other people.

Much of our understanding of social influence has developed from classic 20th-century studies. These studies demonstrate the power of norms to guide behaviour and the command that groups have over individuals' thoughts and actions. We will begin by outlining some of the important findings from these studies and consider some of the key elements of social influence. We will then discuss when, why and how social influence takes place and outline the processes that occur when people resist social influence. Finally, we will consider the unique case of minority social influence, where small groups or individuals bring about social change against the odds.

CLASSIC STUDIES OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Sherif's studies of emergent group norms

Sherif (1935, 1937) provided one of the first compelling demonstrations of social influence in his study of the emergence of social norms. Sherif investigated the emergence of social norms in now classic laboratory experiments. He argued that because people have a basic need to feel that they are thinking and acting appropriately in social situations, they use other people as *frames of reference* to guide their own thoughts and actions. In particular, people use others as social comparators under conditions of uncertainty or ambiguity; that is, when they are unsure how to respond, they will look to others for examples, information and guidance. Because they do this, people also have a tendency to prefer moderate or 'average' positions because they are the most common and are hence perceived as the most appropriate or correct. Sherif argued that this basic preference for moderateness explains how norms emerge in groups and how the convergence of group members to the emergent norms can intensify consensus within groups. If people use others as a frame of reference, their behaviours should converge over time and people will also use that information to guide future behaviours and judgements.

Sherif (1935) carried out experiments in which he asked two or three participants to sit in a darkened room and observe a pinpoint of light. A visual illusion called the *autokinetic effect* makes the light look as though it is moving in the dark – this illusion is a result of eye movements occurring when physical objects are not present to act as frames of reference. At this point in the study, the light suddenly disappeared and participants (who were unaware of the visual illusion) were asked to estimate how much the light had moved. Using this technique, Sherif capitalized on the fact that participants would be uncertain about their judgements and would need to establish their own internal frame of reference. Over 100 trials, Sherif discovered that participants did just that – as time passed, their estimates converged to a small range of responses, so that each participant adopted their own personal frame of reference.

Later, Sherif (1935) asked participants to perform the same task, but instead of making their estimates on their own, they were asked to call out their responses in a group of two or three other participants. Here, the results showed that participants quickly started to agree with each other, and responses converged, so that a *group normative* estimate evolved after only a short number of trials. By the third and fourth testing session, a strong group norm had developed and everyone's estimates had become similar (see Figure 9.1a). Sherif argued that in this task, the group members questioned the internal frame of reference they had developed earlier and instead used each others' estimates to guide their own responses. So, gradually, a *joint* frame of reference was established, which informed future judgements. Indeed, further testing demonstrated that this norm persisted over time, even when participants were asked again to provide their own individual estimates. After three group testing phases, participants' individual responses relied strongly on the group normative estimates that had been established earlier (see Figure 9.1b). When the participants saw how others had responded, they modified their responses and, as a group, converged on a consistent answer.

TIME TO REFLECT

Sherif's work demonstrates that people use the attitudes and behaviours of others to guide their own responses. In particular, people tend to do this when they are unsure of their own position. Can you think of a time when this happened to you? Was this a good or bad thing?

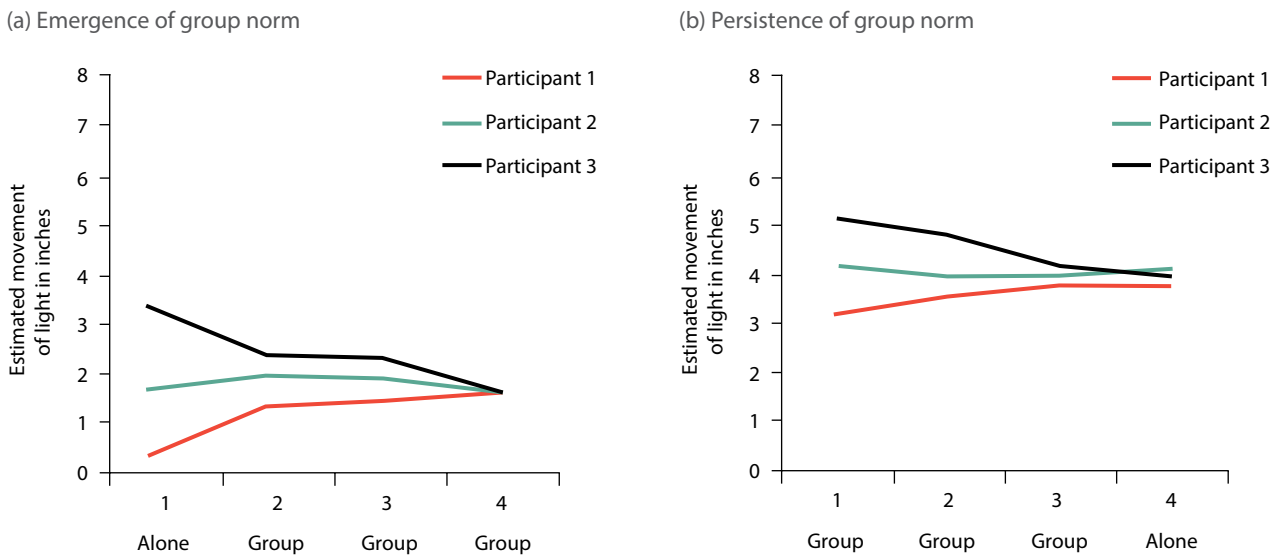

FIGURE 9.1 Emergence and persistence of group norms In (a), participants were asked to call out their estimates of how much a pinpoint of light moved in the dark. Doing so alone, their responses were quite varied but when they called their estimates out loud in a group over repeated phases, a group norm emerged and the variation in responses all but disappeared. In (b), we see how the norms persisted – after three group phases of the same task, participants relied on the group norm when giving their responses individually.

Subsequent investigations corroborated Sherif's findings. For example, Jacobs and Campbell (1961) conducted the same experiment but this time used only one participant. The other group members in the study were confederates who had been asked to respond in a predetermined (and often extreme) manner. Again, results revealed that the majority norm influenced individual participants' estimates (see also MacNeil & Sherif, 1976). Rohrer, Baron, Hoffman and Swander (1954) demonstrated that people retested individually a year later were still influenced by the group norm. Abrams, Wetherell, Cochrane, Hogg and Turner (1990) showed that the experience of a group identity is very important to conformity effects in the autokinetic effect paradigm. The three 'true' participants in their study conformed less to the judgements of confederates when they were assigned a different label (true participants were labelled 'H', and confederates were labelled 'J', and each participant and confederate had to read out their assigned letter when making a judgement). Participants conformed still less to the confederates when they were both given a label and had an opportunity to play a brief game together before the autokinetic judgement task started: this game was deisgned to heighten a sense of shared identity among members of group 'H'. Participants were, to paraphrase the title of Abrams et al.'s (1990) article, working out what to think based on who they are.

Overall, these experiments provide compelling demonstrations of the power of the group to influence individuals' judgements, even when those judgements are trivial, meaningless and even false (for a review, see Abrams & Levine, 2012). In these studies, conformity to the group's norm was a response to ambiguity. The norm provided a framework for individuals to judge the most appropriate response when they were unsure of their own individual judgements. The norm also guided behaviour even in the absence of the group (see Turner, 1991). In essence, the norm was contagious. There are many real-life examples of norm formation and contagion. For example, some behaviours become more socially acceptable over time, such as talking on a mobile phone while using public transport. Also, think of the language and symbols you use to email and text message your friends. Accepted ways of expressing emotion including emoticons have emerged. These have caught on in such a big way that most users are familiar with these norms of communication and use them (see Chapter 6). For new users who are uncertain how to communicate using these methods, the norms help guide their own behaviour.

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FIGURE 9.2 New norms of behaviour New norms of behaviour form all the time. For example, it is now normal to use a smartphone to text, email and social network even while physically hanging out with friends and family. This behaviour is termed 'phubbing', and research suggests that those who frequently 'phub' others tend to see such behaviour as normal (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). Experimental studies show that, on the other hand, when people are 'phubbed', they take it very personally, and the experience has much the same effects as other forms of ostractism (see Chapter 8: Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018).

TIME TO REFLECT

In your everyday university, work or family life, what other examples of norm formation can you think of?

Asch's studies of conformity

Asch argued, in a similar vein to Sherif, that people look to others to help them decide how to act themselves, and that it is logical to do so in ambiguous situations when they are uncertain about how to behave. However, Sherif argued that when people are confident that their own judgements and behaviours are appropriate, they should not necessarily be affected by the norms of a group. In particular, when the appropriate judgement is *unambiguous* and one would expect no disagreement in judgement, individuals should resist group influence.

To test whether ambiguity matters, Asch (1951, 1952, 1956) invited a group of male participants to take part in what was said to be a perceptual judgement task. They were seated around a table in a group of seven or nine. Only one man was a true participant; the rest were confederates who, as in Jacobs and Campbell's (1961) study, had been asked to respond in a predetermined manner. The group was presented with a diagram of a standard line (see the left of Figure 9.3) and three comparison lines (see the right of Figure 9.3). The participants' task was to choose which comparison line matched the standard line: crucially, this is not an ambiguous judgement since there are obviously right and wrong answers. Confederates and the participant were asked to call out their answers to the rest of the group, and the participant was asked to respond second to last in the group. In the first trial, the confederates responded with the correct answer and, in turn, the participant confidently gave the correct response. In the second trial, everyone was again able to correctly identify the line that matched the target line. However, something more interesting happened on the third trial. As in the previous trials, it was obvious which one was the correct line, but this time all the confederates responded incorrectly. It was then

the participant's turn and he was faced with a confusing situation. How should he respond? He knew his peers were wrong but responding differently would make him stand out from the crowd. There were 18 trials altogether and the confederates were asked to give an incorrect response on 12 trials. There was also a control condition in which participants gave their responses privately, as individuals.

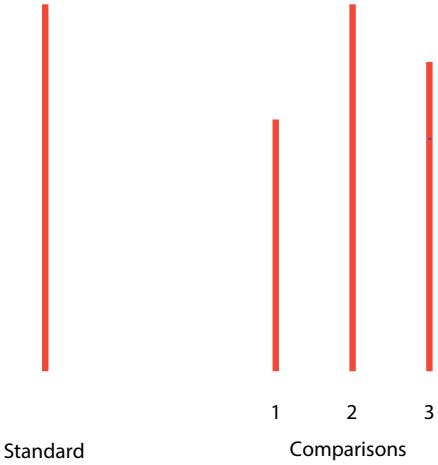

FIGURE 9.3 Line judgement task from Asch (1951)

Results revealed that, in the control group, where everyone gave their responses individually, 99 per cent of participants chose the correct line. This task was easy and unambiguous, and so there was no reason to expect that the norm formation observed by Sherif would occur. However, in the experimental group, where participants made their judgements alongside a group who gave clearly incorrect responses, approximately half the participants conformed to the group's incorrect judgements in 6 or more of the crucial trials. Further, approximately 5 per cent of the participants conformed to the erroneous group decision in all 12 key trials. Indeed, the 'average' conformity rate across participants and trials was around 32 per cent, and only one-quarter of participants showed no conformity at all. Asch (1955) concluded:

> That we have found the tendency to conformity in our society so strong that reasonably intelligent and well-meaning young people are willing to call white black is a matter of concern. It raises questions about our ways of education and about the values that guide our conduct (p. 6).

If you are thinking that social changes since the 1950s may have reduced conformity and therefore the validity of Asch's (1955) results and conclusions, think again. The results widely replicate, even in the 21st century (e.g., Fujita & Mori, 2018; Mori & Arai, 2010; Ullrich, Butz & Deifenbach, 2018; van den Bos, Lind, Bommelé & VandeVondele, 2015). Among these replications, Mori and Arai (2010) showed that Asch's results could be replicated without the need to have lying confederates; they manipulated the display using polarizing lenses so that one participant literally saw different lines than the others. Ullrich et al. (2018) go a step further and show that confederates do not even need to be human: in their study, participants conformed to a *robot*'s erroneous line judgements.

Although research indicates that confederates do not have to be human in order to elicit conformity, it is not yet clear whether *participants* need to be human. Are animals similarly prone to social influence, and conformity in particular? Only recently have researchers turned their attention to this question. This question is important for many reasons: to the extent that social psychology can tell us what it means to be human, we need to understand whether conformity to norms, and all that goes with that, arises from nature as well as nurture, and whether it is something unique to us as human beings (unlike, say, cognitive dissonance, which as we saw in Chapter 4 is also displayed by other species). As we saw in his quote, the moral that Asch (1955) drew from his studies is that there is a cultural problem: education and values place too much value on conformity. If animals were to behave similarly, this would point the finger away from 'nurture' and towards 'nature' – that is, our innate character as human beings, presumably shaped by evolution.

Addressing this issue, van Leeuwen and Haun (2014) review studies of conformity in various species, and find some evidence of what might be called conformity in animals ranging from primates (van de Waal, Borgeaud & Whiten, 2013, found that wild vervet monkeys conformed to their peers' strategies when foraging for food), rats (Galef & Whiskin, 2008; Jolles, de Visser & van den Bos, 2011) and fish (Pike & Laland, 2010 – no pun intended) (Figure 9.4). Conformity is essential for the stability of birdsong in several avian species (Lachlan, Ratmann & Nowicki, 2018). Even the humble fruit fly, with its miniature brain, has been shown to be subject to some form of social influence. In one study, female fruit flies preferred to mate with poor-condition

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IMAGE 100

FIGURE 9.4 Animals subject to social influence Animals, ranging from primates such as the vervet monkey to the humble fruit fly, have been shown to be subject to some sort of social influence.

males they had seen in the company of another female rather than a good-condition male whom they had not (Mery et al., 2009). They also copy other female fruit flies' preferences for places to lay their eggs (Battesti, Moreno, Joly & Mery, 2012).

Although these results are impressive evidence that all sorts of animals are subject to social influence, van Leeuwen and Haun (2014) point to some of their methodological problems and interpretive challenges (see also van Leeuwen, Kendal, Tennie & Haun, 2015). For example, these studies seldom examine conformity to social norms – that is, the preferences of a majority rather than a minority – and instead examine conformity to the behaviour of a few observed animals. They also argue that some studies of conformity in human beings have similar problems. Recent studies of primates generally indicate little or no evidence of conformity (e.g., Haun, Rekers & Tomasello, 2014). The jury is out on this important question – animals are clearly subject to social influence, but much work remains to be done to determine when and how.

On the face of it, the participants in Asch's experiments were under no obvious pressure to conform; that is, there were no clear consequences for conforming to or deviating from the norm. Participants and confederates were not rewarded or punished for what they did. Because the task itself was relatively trivial, researchers questioned the power of the findings to explain behaviour in more meaningful situations. In particular, if people react to such a trivial task in this way, how might they behave in a task that *does* have important consequences associated with the decision to conform or dissent? Also, if people conform so clearly on such a trivial task, how might they respond to an authority figure who is directly trying to coerce them? Are people blindly obedient to the orders of others, even when they are asked to perform cruel acts? Stanley Milgram wanted to know more about these processes. He sought to investigate specifically what happens if the social pressure to conform conflicts with the pressures of conscience.

Milgram's studies of obedience

Milgram (1965, 1974) was interested in the psychological properties of people who commit atrocities. Specifically, he was influenced by the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann (Arendt, 1963), who, as one of Hilter's primary officers during the Second World War, sent millions of Jewish people to their deaths in Nazi concentration camps. Contrary to public expectation, Eichmann did not display the characteristics of an evil, cruel 'monster' when on trial. Instead, he presented as a normal, everyday, perhaps even boring, family man. When questioned about his actions, he stated that he had nothing in particular against Jewish people, he was merely 'following orders'. The question raised by Eichmann's trial is intriguing and addresses one of the fundamental aspects of human nature – if placed in a situation where the behaviour you were being asked to perform went against your conscience, how would you behave? If you were asked to hurt another human being, would you simply follow the order?

These questions inspired Milgram to conduct some of psychology's most famous and controversial experiments (Blass, 1992, 2004). To begin his programme of research, Milgram placed an advertisement in a newspaper for male participants aged 20–50 to participate in a scientific study on memory and learning at Yale University. Once they arrived in the laboratory, they were informed that their task was to teach another person (the 'student') a series of paired words, and then test their memory for those words. The student was, in fact, a confederate who was trained to respond in a predetermined manner. If their partner made any errors, participants ('teachers') were required to punish them by giving electrical shocks. At this point, it is important to emphasize that no shocks were *actually* given to the students. The crucial aspect of this experiment is that the teachers all *believed* that they were going to administer painful shocks to students when they responded incorrectly.

To begin, the teacher watched as the student was strapped into a chair and had paste and an electrode attached to his wrist (Figure 9.5a). The experimenter explained that the paste was to prevent blistering and burning. The experimenter also explained that although the shocks are painful, they would cause no permanent tissue damage. At this point in the experiment, the student explained to the experimenter that he had a slight heart condition. Then the teacher was separated from the student and was seated in a room in front of a machine called the 'shock generator' (see Figure 9.5b), while the experimenter was seated at a desk behind the teacher.

(a) The confederate 'student' is strapped to the machine that will supposedly deliver him painful shocks

(b) The shock generator

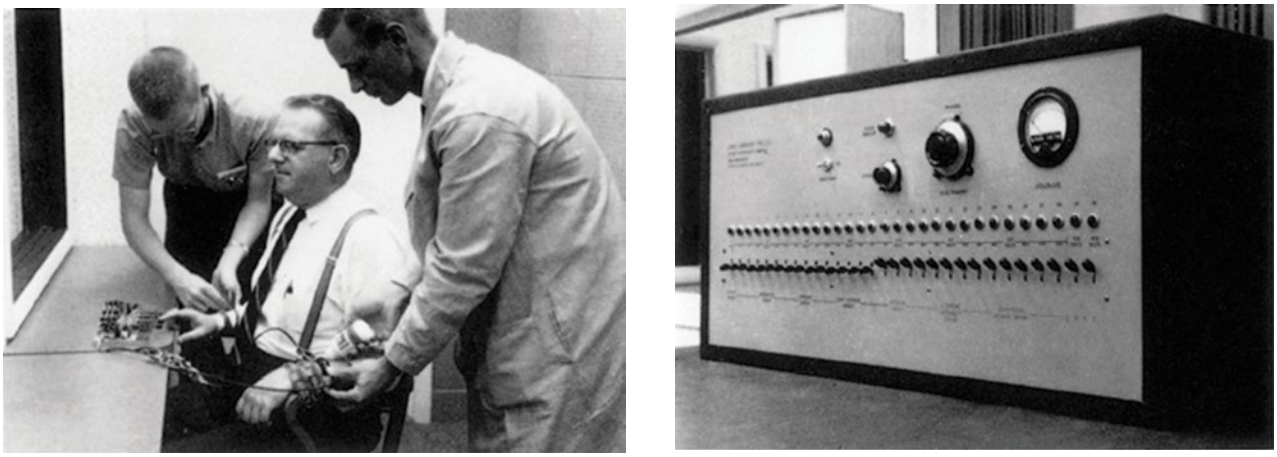


FIGURE 9.5 Stanley Milgram's famous experiment on obedience

Source: From the film Obedience. *Copyright ©1965 by Stanley Milgram. Copyright © renewed 1993 by Alexandra Milgram. Distributed by Alexander Street Press*

The shock generator consisted of 30 switches, each incrementally rising by 15 volts; so, voltage labels ranged from 15v ('slight shock'), 75v ('moderate shock'), 135v ('strong shock'), right through to 450v ('XXX'). Underneath each voltage value and label was a push-down button that allowed the experimenter to administer the shocks. The teacher was given a small (real) sample shock of 45v, and the experiment began. The teacher began to teach the words to the student and then test their memory for the pairs. For each error, the teacher was instructed to administer the next level of shock to the student. The first error was 'punished' with a shock of 15v, the second with a shock of 30v and so on. If the 450v mark was reached, the teacher was asked to keep administering this shock every time the student made an error.

As mentioned earlier, the student was a confederate, and so he was asked to respond in the same scheduled manner for every experimental participant. This is an important aspect of the study as it means that every participant had as close to the same experience of the experiment as possible. The script he was asked to follow is presented in Figure 9.6. He got some of the answers correct, but also made some incorrect responses, which were punished at a higher level

of shock every time. After receiving a shock of 75v, he grunted 'Ugh!' At 180v he shouted that he could take no more and continued to cry with pain after each shock until he screamed with agony at 270v and then ceased to respond at all after 330v. The teacher was instructed to treat this non-response as an incorrect answer and keep flicking the switch to punish the student.

Unsurprisingly, this was an extremely uncomfortable situation for the teachers and this was reflected in their behaviours. They often asked to stop the experiment and check that the student was okay. However, in response, the experimenter, like the confederate student, responded with a scripted set of four responses or 'prods' in the following order:

1. starting with 'please continue'
2. followed by (after a further request to stop the experiment) 'the experiment requires that you continue'
3. then, 'it is absolutely essential that you continue'
4. finally the most coercive instruction, 'you have no other choice; you must go on'.

Milgram described his experiment to psychiatrists, middle-class adults and students, and asked them to predict how far people would be prepared to go in this experiment. What shock level would they go up to? People in all three groups thought they themselves would disobey at about 135v. Not one

75 volts	Ugh!
90 volts	Ugh!
105 volts	(*loud*) Ugh!
120 volts	Ugh! Hey, this really hurts
135 volts	(*loud*) Ugh!
150 volts	(*loud*) Ugh! Experimenter! That's all. Get me out of here. I told you I had heart trouble. My heart's starting to bother me now. Get me out of here, please. My heart's starting to bother me. I refuse to go on. Let me out.
165 volts	(*shouting*) Ugh! Let me out!
180 volts	(*shouting*) Ugh! I can't stand the pain. Let me out of here!
195 volts	Ugh! Let me out of here. Let me out of here. My heart's bothering me. Let me out of here. You have no right to keep me here! Let me out! Let me out of here! Let me out! Let me out of here! My heart's bothering me. Let me out! Let me out!
210 volts	Ugh! Experimenter! Get me out of here. I've had enough. I won't be in the experiment any more.
225 volts	Ugh!
240 volts	Ugh!
255 volts	Ugh! Get me out of here.
270 volts	(*Agonizing scream*) Let me out of here. Let me out of here. Let me out of here. Let me out. Do you hear? Let me out of here.
285 volts	(*Agonizing scream*)
300 volts	(*Agonizing scream*) I absolutely refuse to answer any more. Get me out of here. You can't hold me here. Get me out. Get me out of here.
315 volts	(*Intense agonizing scream*) I told you I refuse to answer. I'm no longer part of this experiment.
330 volts	(*Intense and prolonged agonizing scream*) Let me out of here. Let me out of here. My heart's bothering me. Let me out. I tell you. (Hysterical) Let me out of here. Let me out of here. You have no right to hold me here. Let me out! Let me out! Let me out! Let me out of here! Let me out! Let me out!
Then silence…	

FIGURE 9.6 The confederate schedule in Milgram's study

Source: 'Experiment 5: New Base-Line Condition: The Learner's Schedule of Protests' from Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View *by Stanley Milgram. Copyright © 1974 by Stanley Milgram. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers and with the permission of Pinter & Martin Limited through PLSclear*

person predicted that they would go above 300v. Similarly, people predicted that normal everyday people in general would never reach the XXX mark on the shock generator. The experts also agreed that probably only around 10 per cent of normal people would ever exceed 180v and that virtually nobody would persist to the conclusion of 450v (XXX) – maybe about one in a thousand people might do so. But were they correct? As can be seen from Figure 9.7, the reality differed significantly from the experts' and others' predictions. As predicted, obedience decreased as shock intensity increased. However, 63 per cent of teachers went up to and beyond the 450v XXX maximum shock level.

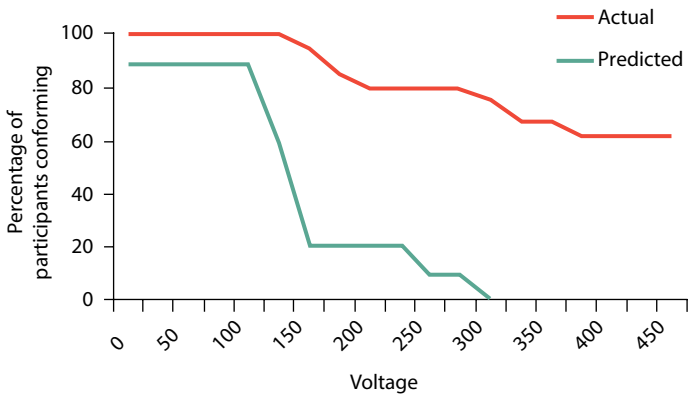


FIGURE 9.7 Actual vs. predicted conformity in Milgram's obedience experiment Experts predicted that most people would disobey ataround 135v but, in reality, the majority of participants persisted with the experiment until the end.

Source: Data from Milgram (1965)

These results are significant for many reasons. First, we must remember that people were administering what they thought were extremely dangerous and painful shocks to another human being – a human being who had been screaming with pain to be let out and had complained that his heart was bothering him. This is surprising behaviour by any standards. Participants' persistence with the task is even more surprising, given the obvious distress they were under. Many of the participants pleaded to stop the experiment, trembled, stuttered when they spoke, laughed nervously and even offered to take the student's place.

Replications of Milgram's studies

As we shall see later in this chapter, Milgram replicated his own studies several times in order to explore the conditions that cause people to be more, or less, obedient. Those replications aside, the studies were not widely replicated for many years, largely because of the serious ethical concerns that the Milgram studies raise (see the Ethics and Research Methods box below). When conceptual replications were run, they were typically very different, precisely to avoid those difficulties. For example, Blass (1992) did not require participants to take orders from an experiementer but instead asked them to explain why people obeyed the experimenter's orders. As we saw in Chapter 1, without independent and relatively direct (i.e. exact) replications, we cannot have strong confidence in the results. This is a serious problem when the original results are as important and influential as Milgram's (Burger, 2009; Miller, 2009).

The problem is made still more serious by the fact that there were important slippages between Milgram's (1974) reportage of his procedures and the procedures that he actually followed. Milgram carefully archived detailed records of the studies – of how they were actually run – at Yale. This practice allows other researchers to scrutinize the methods, results and conclusions of important studies. In fact, in recent years, several researchers have undertaken detailed analyses of these archives (e.g., Blass, 2004; Gibson, 2013; Nicholson, 2011; Perry, 2013a; Russell, 2010). Their findings suggest that though Milgram deserves credit for archiving his materials, there are some serious concerns about how accurately he reported his studies in his published works. In our new era of open science (see Chapter 1), the most reputable journals encourage, and many require, researchers to upload additional information online about their studies alongside articles (since the finite number of pages that can be published in scientific journals generally makes it impossible to include all relevant information). In the 1960s and 70s, this technology was unavailable, and so it was not easy for the wider research community to easily access Milgram's archived materials. Had it been, their scientific and ethical evaluation of Milgram's studies might have been quite different.

Some of the specific scientific and ethical concerns that arise from comparing Milgram's (1974) archives to his published accounts of his research are well reviewed by Griggs and Whitehead (2015), who also note that these concerns are seldom covered in textbooks. They include the crucial observation that the experimenter (who was not, contrary to popular imagination, necessarily Milgram: in fact it was a confederate, John Williams) did not stick tightly to the reported structure of this experiment. That is, he went off-script (Perry, 2013a). For example, he was supposed to use four prods in the strict order we described earlier. However, rather than stopping when the last prod ('You have no other choice, you must go on') did not overcome a participant's objections, the experimenter would sometimes invent more coercive prods. Perry (2013b) suggests that the supposedly 'slavish obedience to authority' (p. 223) in Milgram's studies 'begins to sound much more likely bullying and coercion when you listen to this material'. This concern gives us reason to suspect that more participants complied than would have if the published procedures as described by Milgram (1974) were actually followed. It also gives us reason to doubt his interpretation of those results – are they blind obedience in a situation where people objectively have free choice, or are they also the result of the psychological deprivation of free choice by bullying and hectoring. That said, an important consideration is that the orders placed in the context of the Holocaust and other acts of mass evil seem unlikely to be polite and well scripted in the face of reluctance to obey: and these regimes had the power to humiliate and fire – or worse – those who disobeyed orders.

Analyses of Milgram's archived (and published) results also revealed that participants appeared most likely to disobey the most order-like of the prods. The more the prods were couched as orders, the less likely participants were to obey them (Gibson, 2013). Critics of Milgram's studies have attached a lot of weight to this finding, including Haslam, Reicher and Millard (2015) who have more recently replicated and extended Milgram's studies (more below). These critics think that the finding suggests participants did not blindly follow orders, but regarded the experimenter's prompts as meaningful requests: requests that could be queried and negotiated. For example, Gibson's investigation revealed that, at the participant's insistence, the experimenter sometimes agreed to check on the wellbeing of the confederate – again suggesting that participants' compliance was carefully considered in ways that Milgram's account did not acknowledge. Haslam and colleagues (Haslam, Reicher & Birney, 2014; Haslam, Reicher & Millard, 2015) argue that instead of obeying, participants were actively engaged in their role and made conscious decisions to continue (or not) based on their understanding of the scientific value of their role in the experiment.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Critics have noted that Milgram's participants were less likely to comply with order-like prods than with gentler, more reasoned requests to continue. However, the prods became more and more order-like as the experiment progressed and the voltage increased. This means there is a confound: the lower compliance could be a result of the nature of the prods, or the fact that they occurred only late in the experimental session, when the participant had already signalled reluctance to continue. How might you conduct a better test of whether order-like prods are less likely to be complied with, and therefore that participants are probably not merely obeying orders in the Milgram paradigm? Think about what you would do, and then take a look at an article by Haslam, Reicher & Birney (2014) that addresses this problem and suggests indeed that it is the content of the prods, rather than the order in which they appear, that matters.

The problems surrounding the reportage and interpretation of Milgram's (1974) studies motivated other researchers to try to replicate his studies. Burger (2009) did so and introduced one important modification designed to alleviate the ethical concerns surrounding Milgram's studies. He capped the shocks that could be delivered at 150 volts. He found

that obedience up to this level was comparable to that observed by Milgram. The 150 volt level is important, since the majority of participants who *ever* disobeyed the experimenter in the original studies started to do so at this voltage level (Miller, 2009; Packer, 2008a). At the same time, at the 150 volt level, the participant does not necessarily think they are delivering a dangerous, even lethal, dose of electricity to the confederate. Thus, they are likely to find the experimental situation much less distressing. Doliński et al. (2017) reran this modified format of the Milgram studies in Poland and found that 90 per cent of participants were willing to shock up to and including 150 volts, at which point their participation was terminated (compared to approximately 70 per cent at the same voltage in Milgram and Burger's studies). Disagreeing that it is ethically necessary to restrict the range of shocks to 150 volts, Beauvois, Courbet and Oberlé (2012; see also Bègue et al., 2015) collaborated with French TV producers to stage a highly realistic version of the Milgram studies. Participants in these studies thought that they were participating in a TV game show and were being ordered to shock another contestant, all the way up to 460 volts. Again, high levels of obedience were observed.

In a different approach to lessening the ethical challenges of Milgram's studies, Dambrun and Vatiné (2010) told their French participants that the 'student' was actually a confederate. That is, they deliberately blew the carefully constructed cover story – the deception – at the heart of Milgram's studies. Thus, although the confederate was filmed acting out increasingly distressed reactions to the shocks, until he became unresponsive (at 330 volts), the participant was made fully aware that he was acting. In this version of the Milgram paradigm, 32 per cent of participants obeyed right up to and including the maximum shock of 450 volts. This proportion increased to 50 per cent when the confederate was hidden from the participant (they could hear, but not see him). It was somewhat lower when the confederate was the same nationality as the participants: French (25 per cent) rather than North African (40 per cent). Although these findings are broadly comparable to Milgram's studies, it should be acknowledged that there were only 31 participants in the study, meaning that the observed proportions may not be very reliable.

Another approach to lessening the ethical challenges associated with the Milgram paradigm is to place participants into a fully immersive virtual reality environment, and ask them to do violence to an avatar rather than a human being. Slater et al. (2006) did exactly this, and once again found broadly comparable results to Milgram. They also found that their participants showed clear signs of physiological distress, suggesting that the virtual reality version of Milgram's study was highly engaging. Following suit, Haslam, Reicher and Millard (2015) also put participants through a virtual reality rerun of the Milgram study where participant 'teachers', as well as 'students', were represented as avatars. Once more, they found broadly similar results to Milgram's original studies. However, in light of two of their findings, they argued against the interpretation that participants' behaviour reflected mere obedience to authority: first, the more participants identified with the experimenter, rather than the learner, the more shocks they delivered, and second, participants tended to be less likely to obey prompts that most resembled an order, rather than a request. They argued that participants were engaged with the presumed value of the scientific experiment and thus were following the experimenter as a leader, rather than uncritically obeying orders.

Digital Vision/Sally Anscombe

If the findings of Haslam, Reicher and Millard (2015) suggest that participants did not have the psychological experience of merely following orders, but rather of collaborating with the experimenter in the name of scientific discovery, the results of another replication point back towards Milgram's original obedience explanation. Caspar, Christensen, Cleeremans and Haggard (2016) found that when participants were ordered to harm the confederate, EEG recordings of their brain activity more closely resembled those found in passive movement than free choice. However, it should be noted that participants were given a financial incentive in this study to harm the 'victim': they were paid for each shock or penalty they gave the victim. Thus, they were arguably doing it for the love of money, not of science, and may not have been acting as engaged followers for this reason.

These replications allow us to draw several important conclusions about Milgram's studies and their relevance today. The first is undeniably depressing: willingness to deliver painful and apparently lethal shocks to another human being for as trivial a reason as failing in an experimental task has not declined in the 50 or so years since Milgram's original studies. The second conclusion is that whatever the reported and unreported methodological flaws in Milgram's studies, his basic results essentially hold true: people deliver these nasty shocks even when the experimenter sticks to a preordained script, and follow nasty instructions in an array of different guises and contexts. The third conclusion is that it is becoming increasingly clear that people are not simply obeying orders when they are delivering shocks and that the way Milgram portrayed his work in his published work, films (Perry, 2015) and interviews (Gibson, Blenkinsopp, Johnstone & Marshall, 2017) invoked a particular and questionable idea of obedience rather than voluntary compliance. There is some indication that people may lose a sense of agency when they follow instructions under some circumstances, but also that they are more likely to follow instructions when they perceive that by doing so, they are playing an important role in scientific discovery. When the instructions are just blunt orders, compliance may drop, although – and this is very important to remember – it by no means evaporates completely. It is also possible to argue, as Gibson (2019) does, that obedience may occur even when there is no explicit order from an authority figure: people may try to work out what authority figures require of them and try to comply. Gibson argues that this was evident in one variant of Milgram's studies in which the experimenter was not in the room issuing orders. Considering the Holocaust and other mass atrocities, we may conclude that although some compliance may have been a matter of mere blind obedience, some of it is more likely to have been a considered engagement with the atrocity and its ideological basis.

EXPLORING FURTHER

There are several demonstrations of Milgram's experiment online, including an example shown on the BBC in 2009. Take some time to watch an example and note the participants' response to the task. Consider what you are seeing in light of the various ideas about, and critiques of, Milgram's studies you have read here and in other readings. Does it look, for example, like participants are following orders? Does it look like they are distressed? Is Milgram's claim that the experiment did not adversely affect participants in the long run credible? We also recommend watching the film *Experimenter* (2015), directed by Michael Almereyda, that dramatizes Milgram's research. In light of all the evidence and debates you have read about here, we especially invite you to do so critically.

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Ethics and the Milgram studies

For obvious reasons, Milgram's studies sparked a great deal of debate about the ethics of conducting studies with the potential to cause psychological distress to participants; so much so that his application to join the American Psychological Association was delayed for a year (for coverage of the ethical debate, see Baumrind, 1964, 1985; Marcus, 1974; Miller, 1986, 2009; Nicholson, 2011, 2015). After all, it is not every day that participants in university research believe they are administering painful shocks to other people. In particular, critics pointed out that the participants experienced severe distress and that this distress could have lasting effects beyond leaving the laboratory.

Further, they argued that the nature of the debrief, revealing that the participants had been the subjects of a huge hoax, could have a significant impact on participants' self-esteem and future trust in others (Baumrind, 1964; Schlenker & Forsyth, 1977).

In response to these criticisms, Milgram argued that he was concerned about the welfare of his experimental participants. He argued that his debrief was carefully constructed and delivered and that upon being debriefed, participants were actually relieved (not angry or upset) when they discovered that they had not been delivering painful shocks to another person. Further, in follow-up interviews and questionnaires administered to over 1,000 experimental participants, Milgram found that over 83 per cent of participants said they were glad to have taken part, while just over 1 per cent were sorry to have taken part; 15 per cent reported neutral feelings (Milgram, 1992, 2009). Interviews conducted with the aide of a psychiatrist indicated that there were no psychological ill effects for the participants. However, some critics have argued that these data are not enough to establish that his studies were ethical. If no participants suffered enduring distress, this may be a matter of good luck more than good management. The point, these critics argue, is that Milgram took risks with the welfare of his participants that may not have been warranted. Indeed, subsequent investigations of his archived records suggest that, contrary to Milgram's denial that any participant had suffered long-lasting effects, one participant reported becoming depressed, and another reported losing his job (in part) because of the psychological effects of the experiment. One reason the experiment may have adversely affected some participants is that the archive suggests that Milgram did not immediately and thoroughly debrief all participants, as he claimed (Nicholson, 2011).

Milgram's experiments have had a great impact on how social psychologists carry out their research today. In particular, these studies largely provided the rationale for introducing *informed consent* procedures in psychological experiments, where participants are informed of any potential negative impact (e.g., stress) they may experience and are fully debriefed about the purpose of the research once the study is concluded. If they are deceived in any way about the 'true nature' of the study, participants are fully informed of the purpose of this deception. *Codes of ethics* are in place to protect research participants from undue harm in doing psychological experiments. A discussion of research ethics in social psychology is presented in Chapter 1.

Questions

There are five crucial questions to ask:

1. Do you think Milgram's study should have been conducted? Does the information gained outweigh the potential stress caused by the participants? This is one of the main considerations for people who are asked to review research ethics applications. Write down some points to justify your answer.
2. Was the way Milgram's study was conducted – and reported – ethical? How could its ethically questionable features have been improved? For example, how could participants' consent been more informed? How could the debrief have been improved? How could the reportage have been more ethical?
3. Is it ethical to replicate Milgram's studies, knowing what he found – for example, that the situation was highly distressing for participants, and that the majority of participants delivered maximum shocks? To put the question the other way, if you prefer, is it ethical *not* to replicate Milgram's studies?
4. There is plenty of commentary on the ethics of the Milgram studies, on the Internet and in academic journals. Locate these sources by following the

references cited in this section (eg., Miller, 2009), and also try searching for 'Milgram ethics'. You might want to examine two recent special journal issues containing several articles that critically examine Milgram's legacy: one in the journal *Theory and Psychology*, edited by Brannigan, Nicholson and Cherry (2015), and the other in the *Journal of Social Issues*, edited by Reicher, Haslam and Miller (2014).

5. Finally, an important debating point was raised by Baumrind (1964), who argued that Milgram's studies were inherently unethical because participants did not understand the nature and purpose of the study that they signed up for. She argues that deceiving participants about the purpose of the study is inherently wrong, even if participants are informed about the true purpose afterwards (in a debrief). What do you think of this argument? If you look at many of the studies we discuss in this textbook, how many of them could have produced meaningful results without deceiving participants?

Importantly, the classic studies of social influence show that conformity often predominates over common sense. In the case of Milgram's studies, conformity also clashes with the demands of conscience. These results have had a significant impact on many areas of social psychology and have provided the foundations for the study of social influence. However, before we turn our attention to some of the mechanisms underlying conformity, we need to discuss one last study that has significantly shaped how we view social influence.

EXPLORING FURTHER

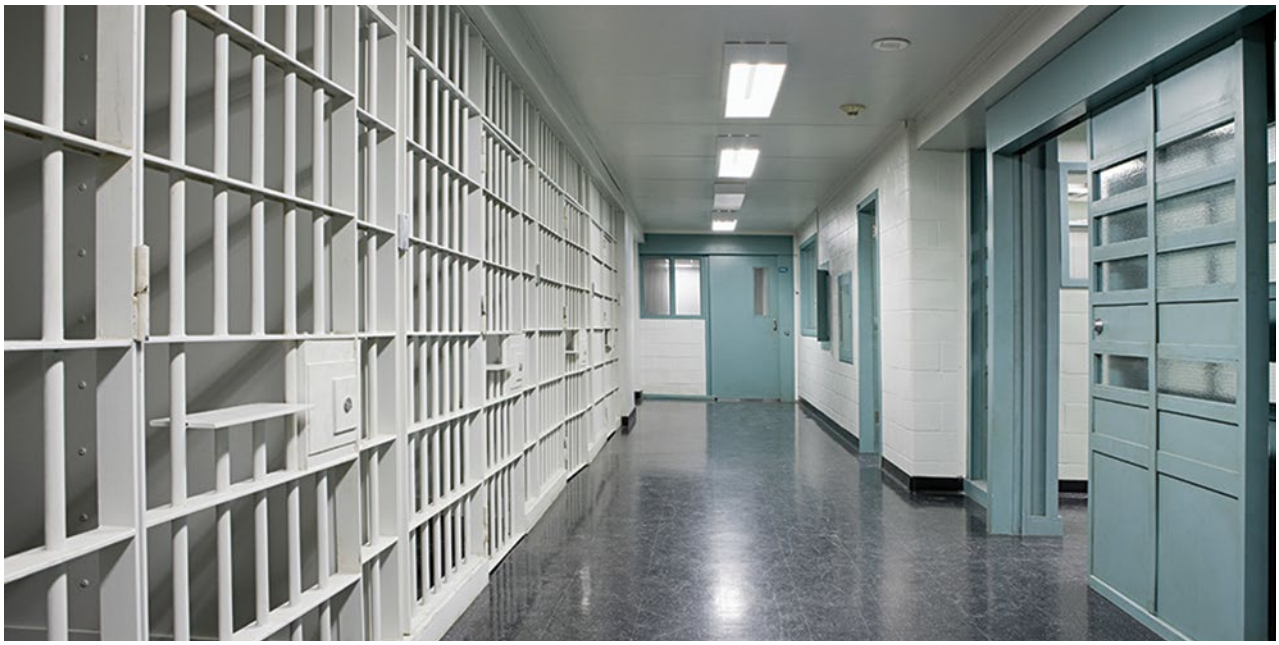
It is difficult to come to terms with Milgram's findings. In lectures, we often show original footage of the Milgram study and students watch with muted giggles. We ask them what they think they would have done themselves if in the same situation and most respond with answers such as 'I would never do that', or 'I could never give someone electric shocks'. It is difficult to believe that this behaviour is possible. But the reality is that many of them would do exactly what Milgram's participants did. It is easy to demonstrate the powerful norm of obedience. For example, try standing by a doorway at university and tell students who try to go through the door that they cannot use it (you do not need to say any more than this). Count how many people turn away and find a different door, simply because they are told to do so. It may help to wear a yellow high-vis vest, just as Milgram wore a white coat, to gain an air of authority. How does the number you counted map onto the figures observed by Milgram? Can you think of other demonstrations of conformity?

The Stanford Prison Experiment

Perhaps the results of Milgram's experiments are not enough to shake your faith in the decency of ordinary men and women. After all, the participants in these experiments were only doing as they were told and they did not appear to enjoy it. Certainly, no participant went above and beyond the call of duty by, say, administering stronger than instructed shocks, or taunting their victims. Surely, we should not expect a group of ordinary people to engage in wilful, extensive and improvised tyranny while at close quarters with their victims?

Well, they did, according to a famous study by Philip Zimbardo and his colleagues (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973). In the summer of 1971, this group of researchers posted a newspaper advertisement asking for male university students to participate in a 'psychological study of prison life' for a period of one to two weeks. The study was to take place in Stanford University, situated in the San Francisco Bay area; ironically, well known as an unusually liberal region of

the USA. Respondents were screened to ensure they were free of medical or psychological problems and did not have a criminal or violent past. The 24 eligible respondents were assigned randomly into 'prisoner' or 'guard' roles.



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A few days later, the 'prisoners' were surprised to find themselves arrested on criminal charges by officers from the local police force. Much like 'real' suspects, they were cuffed, searched, read their rights, bundled into a police car and taken to the police station for processing. The prisoners were then taken to the prison, which had been constructed in the basement of the psychology department. Here, they were extensively searched, stripped naked and sprayed with insecticide, again much as 'real' prisoners would be. They were further humiliated by virtue of being clothed in smocks – that is, uniforms that looked like dresses – as well as noisy, uncomfortable ankle chains and stockings on their heads meant to approximate the head-shaving that was often imposed on prisoners. Each prisoner was assigned a number, to be used in place of their name throughout their time in the prison. The guards were briefed by Zimbardo, who played the role of superintendent of the prison, and his co-researchers, who played warden and lieutenant roles. They were dressed in a khaki-coloured uniform, carried a truncheon and wore mirrored sunglasses, which were meant to **deindividuate** them (see Chapter 10 for more on this topic). They were given no specific training for the roles, but were charged with maintaining law and order in the prison. They made up a set of prison rules and were responsible for enforcing them.

Deindividuation
The tendency for people in groups, or people who are anonymous in some way, to abandon normal constraints on their behaviour and behave in a deregulated manner.

The first day of the prison simulation passed without major incident, but a prisoner rebellion unexpectedly broke out the next day. This rebellion provoked a sharp and immediate lurch towards authoritarianism. Guards stripped prisoners of their privileges and, indeed, their clothes. This marked the beginning of an orchestrated campaign of harassment, degradation and intimidation visited by the guards upon the prisoners, although by no means all the guards played an enthusiastic role in this campaign. Prisoners were even denied the use of the toilet facilities at night, being forced to urinate and defecate into buckets. They were also forced to clean the toilets with their bare hands. Eerily reminiscent of the abuse that was to occur over 30 years later in the US-run Abu Ghraib prison for Iraqi POWs, prisoners were also forced to simulate homosexual acts. Conditions became so filthy, oppressive and

distressing that the experiment had to be stopped after only six days. By that stage, one prisoner had already left after suffering acute psychological distress, becoming irrational, incoherent and paranoid.

TIME TO REFLECT

Accounts of US military abuse and torture of prisoners held at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq arose in 2004 after the release of photographs that appalled people around the world. How can Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment help us to understand these events?

It is rare to find a study in which so much care has been taken to create an emotionally impactful situation, one that seems real to participants and involves them completely. It is also rare to find a study that produced such incendiary and important results. Milgram had already shown that, in the right circumstances – indeed, circumstances that mimic the settings of many historical atrocities – ordinary people can do extraordinarily appalling things. In contrast to the reluctant, morally conflicted compliance of Milgram's participants, Zimbardo's guards applied initiative, creativity and even some enthusiasm to the tasks demanded by the roles they had been given.

EXPLORING FURTHER

It is worth watching the 2007 film *Die Welle (The Wave),* where we see the influence of Milgram's and Zimbardo's work on the power of the situation. In this film, a high school teacher runs an experiment with his class to demonstrate to his students what life would be like under a dictatorship. The students become gripped by the new 'fascist' social order and the experiment spirals out of control.

CRITICAL FOCUS

The Stanford Prison Experiment and the psychology of 'evil'

Arguably, the Stanford Prison Experiment and Milgram's studies are among the most important in social psychology. Their impact has been felt well beyond the disciplinary boundary of social psychology. In his recent book about the life and legacy of Milgram, Thomas Blass (2004) refers to him as the 'man who shocked the world'. The media regularly mention Milgram's work, and 'rediscover' the studies periodically in response to topical examples of social influence and obedience. Many professions have taken note of his work – for example the US army teaches Milgram's findings to officers in training in order to educate them about issues surrounding obedience (Persaud, 2005). Political scientists, sociologists and historians have drawn on Milgram's and Zimbardo's findings in their accounts of the appalling conflicts of the 20th century and beyond (e.g., Browning, 1992). These experiments have also had an effect on the popular imagination. Some films are actually about fictional versions of these experiments, such as the German films *Das Experiment (The Experiment)* and *Die Welle (The Wave).* Milgram and Zimbardo's influence can also be seen in the successful TV series, *Lost,* in which survivors of a plane crash are stranded on a remote and uncharted island and appear to be unwitting participants in a vast psychological experiment. Here, the power of the experiment over social behaviour and perception appears literally to be magical.

For most social psychologists, including Zimbardo and Milgram themselves, their experiments showed that evil arises from the power of the situation. According to the general form of this idea, if you want to explain social

behaviour, you are more likely to find the answers in the situations that people find themselves in, rather than in their personality profiles. More specifically, some situations are 'evil', placing normative pressure on people to perform evil deeds. In these situations, people enter a psychological state in which moral judgement and personal responsibility are suspended in favour of conformity, whether to the commands of a leader or the norms of the group. Zimbardo (2007), in a book of the same title, calls this the 'Lucifer effect' and argues that the power of the situation is sufficient to cause good people to do bad things.

Along similar lines, historian Hannah Arendt (1963) coined the term 'the banality of evil'. For Arendt, even the most atrocious historical evils are banal, meaning that they are committed by individuals without malice, but also without reflection. Arendt was inspired by attending the trial of Adolf Eichmann – the apparently normal, timid, rather dull, but spectacularly murderous official who had been responsible for the administration of the Nazis' 'final solution', in which millions of European Jewish people were killed. More recently, however, historians have questioned the banality of evil. Later in Eichmann's trial (interestingly, after Arendt had left), some witnesses testified that far from being mild-mannered, he was a fanatical bully who expressed vehement hatred for Jewish people (Cesarani, 2005). These historians argued that rather than being led into evil by the Nazi regime, as if sliding down a slippery slope (Haslam & Reicher, 2008), people like Eichmann strived towards increasingly evil objectives in pursuit of their careers, their ideology and the extreme prejudices that ensued. They were, in the words of the Holocaust archivist Yaacov Lozowick (2003), the 'alpinists of evil' (p. 279).

The key point that Lozowick and other critical historians make is that evil does not arise only from situations. This same essential point underlies some of the recent criticisms by social psychologists of the standard interpretation of Milgram's and Zimbardo's studies. One such critique is that it is not normally the case that people are randomly allocated to situations. People seek out situations that suit them, that speak to their values and preferences (Ickes, Snyder & Garcia, 1997; Larsen, Diener & Emmons, 1986). It is difficult to blame a situation entirely for the behaviour of people who have chosen to put themselves in that situation (Blass, 1991).

Carnahan and McFarland (2007) ran a study that elegantly demonstrated the relevance of this point to Zimbardo's prison experiment. In the campus newspapers of several universities in southern USA, they posted one of two advertisements for a psychological study. The 'experimental' advertisement was modelled closely on the original from the Stanford Prison Experiment, asking for male college students to participate in a 'psychological study of prison life'. The 'control' advertisement was largely identical except the last three words – 'of prison life' – were deleted. The first thing that Carnahan and McFarland found was that far fewer students volunteered for the 'prison life' than the 'control' study. It was even necessary to rerun the 'prison life' version of the advertisement just to get the numbers up to an acceptable minimum. Finally, after screening participants for criminality and health problems, as Zimbardo and his colleagues had done, they ended up with 30 volunteers for the 'prison life' study and 61 for the 'control' study.

Apart from being fewer in number, the young men who signed up for the 'prison life' study were also different in kind. Specifically, they were more aggressive, authoritarian, Machiavellian, narcissistic, more interested in dominance (see Chapter 11 for coverage of 'social dominance orientation'), less empathic and less inclined to help others (see Chapter 14 for coverage of altruism). This is quite a list of traits, all related to the kinds of abuse and tyranny observed in the Stanford Prison Experiment. Thus, although Carnahan and McFarland did not go on to replicate the Stanford Prison Experiment, there is reason to believe that its findings might be explained, in part, by the characteristics of those who volunteered to take part in it.

There are other reasons to doubt that the bulk of the blame for evil actions can be laid at the feet of 'evil situations'. As well as choosing what situations to place themselves in, people create and modify these situations. Indeed, both Milgram and Zimbardo carefully constructed the situations in which their participants were placed. In other words, the situations that promoted evil behaviour in these experiments were human creations, designed precisely to give evil every chance to flourish. Of course, the 'evil situations' that one encounters in the real world – concentration camps, organized death squads and shadowy interrogation centres – are similarly designed precisely to facilitate acts that we would normally call 'evil', such as torture and murder. Purely situational explanations for evil actions leave the creation of evil situations unexplained.

Evil situations are not only designed by people, they are typically commanded by people who have been granted, or who assume, a leadership role. Milgram's studies of obedience were designed to explain the psychology of those who follow, rather than give, orders. In contrast, Zimbardo's study seemed to show that people would act in evil ways even in the absence of orders to do so (see also Gibson, 2019). Certainly, the specific forms of tyranny exercised by guards were not explicitly ordered, such as the frequent demand that prisoners do press-ups, the

confinement to cells or forcing prisoners to clean toilets with their bare hands. But Haslam and Reicher (2007) point out a telling passage in Zimbardo's instructions to the guards at the beginning of the experiment:

> We can create in the prisoners feelings of boredom, a sense of fear to some degree, we can create a notion of arbitrariness that their life is totally controlled by us, by the system, you, me ... They'll have no freedom of action, they can do nothing, or say nothing that we don't permit. We're going to take away their individuality in various ways. In general what all this leads to is a sense of powerlessness. (Zimbardo, 2007, p. 55)

It is clear from this passage that the guards had been provided with a set of general instructions that we would normally call 'evil', being extremely authoritarian, creating a strong sense of 'us' and 'them' and thus tending to motivate and legitimize the kinds of behaviours that the guards went on to perform. As Haslam and Reicher (2007) point out, in many cases of real-world tyranny, not least in the Nazi Holocaust, orders are often in this general, strategic form. Those on the front lines are responsible for interpreting these orders and working out how to implement them. This often requires considerable initiative and ingenuity. They are seldom given orders in a step-by-step form that they could mindlessly follow as if they were machines.

There is other evidence that the experimenter and his assistants – who also played leadership roles inside the prison environment – actively contributed to the tyrannical climate of the prison. In their report on the Stanford Prison Experiment, Haney et al. (1973) admit that 'over time, the experimenters became more personally involved and were not as distant and objective as they should have been' (p. 78). On the official website of the Stanford Prison Experiment, Zimbardo recounts how Gordon Bower, his friend, former college roommate and eminent psychologist in his own right, dropped by to see the experiment in progress (http://www.prisonexp.org/psychology/27):

> I briefly described what we were up to, and Gordon asked me a very simple question: 'Say, what's the independent variable in this study?'
>
> To my surprise, I got really angry at him. Here I had a prison break on my hands. The security of my men and the stability of my prison was at stake, and now, I had to deal with this bleeding-heart, liberal, academic, effete dingdong who was concerned about the independent variable! It wasn't until much later that I realized how far into my prison role I was at that point – that I was thinking like a prison superintendent rather than a research psychologist.

Thus, Zimbardo and his colleagues, by their own tacit admission, had a role – a leadership role – in the events that transpired in their prison. One way of thinking about this limitation of their research is that the experiment is rife with *demand characteristics* (Banuazizi & Movahedi, 1975). While true, this point may not completely undermine the value of this particular experiment, given the surprising level of brutality that emerged. After all, as Thayer and Saarni (1975) pointed out, what are demand characteristics but a form of social pressure – much like the pressures that might be expected in many real-life prisons?

The most telling point about these demand characteristics is not that the brutality that occurred is somehow unrepresentative of violence and brutality in 'real' prisons and other oppressive institutions. Rather, the crucial point is that the brutality of the Stanford Prison Experiment may not have been an inevitable outcome of the guards conforming to their role. Further, it may not have occurred without the moral support and active encouragement of the experimenter and his assistants who played a leadership role.

Haslam and Reicher (2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008) demonstrated this point in their replication of the Stanford Prison Experiment. This was funded and broadcast by the BBC in 2002, in a series called *The Experiment*, now known as the BBC Prison Study (http://www.bbcprisonstudy.org/). In this version of the experiment, the experimenters did not give the prisoners and guards the same authoritarian instructions. They did not play an internal role in the prison, such as 'superintendent', as Zimbardo had. Much like the original experiment, the BBC Prison Study had to be stopped short because of concerns about the wellbeing of the participants. But these concerns were not aroused by the tyranny of the guards on hapless prisoners. In fact, the prisoners had instigated a revolution, and at one point had effectively taken over the prison. No clear leadership had emerged among the guards and their sense of identity and cohesion as guards had declined through the first few days of the experiment. In contrast, the prisoners tended to have clear leadership structure, provided by a dominant personality in the prison and a trade union negotiator who had been introduced by Haslam and Reicher (2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008), precisely to provide leadership and promote cohesion. This strong and effective leadership appeared to bolster the social identity of the prisoners and gave them the capacity to outmanoeuvre the divided and ineffective guards. After the 'revolution', the participants experimented with a liberal, egalitarian commune in

which the prison/guard distinction was erased. However, this social structure did not appear to be effective and at the time the experiment terminated, the climate was becoming increasingly authoritarian. In other words, it was starting to look more and more like Zimbardo's original prison experiment.

Zimbardo was not impressed with the BBC Prison Study. You can trace the debate between Zimbardo, Haslam and Reicher in the pages of several journals, culminating in a jointly published reflection on toxicity in academic debate – a reflection that might be read as a peace declaration (Haney, Haslam, Reicher, Zimbardo & Wilde, 2018). Of the several criticisms launched by Zimbardo (e.g., Zimbardo, 2006), perhaps the most important is the serious lack of ecological validity in the BBC Prison Study. 'In what kind of prison are the prisoners in charge', wrote Zimbardo (2006, p. 49), who also asked, rhetorically: 'What is the external validity of such events in any real prison anywhere in the known universe?' (p. 49). Although Zimbardo was interested in what factors can make prison life intolerable, he had a much broader agenda, and went on to base claims about the banality of evil and the power of the situation upon his study. Thus, it is not entirely fair to cricize the BBC Prison Study on the grounds that it was unlike a real prison: this limits its value as a study of prison life, but not as a study of the human propensity to display evil in evil situations. However, many acts of mass evil occur in the contexts of tryannies: coerceive, entrenched power structures that are very difficult to overthrow. When tryannies are overthrown, they are often replaced with new ones. The BBC Prison Study seemed to present a slice of time in which a tyranny was overthrown, and was stopped just as it looked like a new one was beginning to form. Its results looked different, arguably, because the experimenters chose to engineer and focus on a different social phenomenon than Zimbardo. Whereas Zimbardo focused on the entrenchment and maintenance of a tyranny, Haslam and Reicher focused on the lead up to, and immediate aftermath of, the revolutionary overthrow of a tyranny.

In sum, we feel that despite their many flaws, Milgram's and Zimbardo's deservedly rank among the most important social psychological studies of all time. They remind us that evil actions such as mass murder are not the exclusive preserve of mentally disturbed or psychopathic individuals who come out of the woodwork when the opportunity arises. Their 'moral' is incredibly important – we should be careful not to complacently assume that we ourselves, or those we love, would refrain from evil actions when ordered or pressured to do so. However, we should not overdo the extent to which we blame the evils that these studies documented, and those in history, on the situation. People create, command and change situations, just as they themselves may be changed by them (Haslam & Reicher, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008). The greatest acts of evil arise from these interactions between people and situations (Carnahan & McFarland, 2007; Haslam & Reicher, 2007).

We conclude this Critical Focus section with a note about a journalist's exposé of the Zimbardo study (Blum, 2018). Just as investigations of archived records raised questions about the ethics of Milgram's study, this exposé casts doubt over the ethical conduct of the Stanford Prison Experiment. More than one participant reported trying to leave the experiment and being refused – a clear contravention, if true, of ethical guidelines and possibly tantamount, Blum suggests, to the crime of false imprisonment. The exposé also casts doubt over its scientific rigour: it turns out, for example, that guards who were not viewed as acting cruelly enough were urged to toughen up by the experimenters, while the notoriously tough guard nicknamed 'John Wayne' was praised by them. When Blum interviewed this guard, he claimed to be motivated by the desire to make the experiment succeed – exactly echoing the 'engaged followership' explanation of Milgram's findings advanced by several researchers, and summarized earlier in this chapter. A prisoner who famously had a 'breakdown' during the experiment claimed that he faked it. In our view, if we accept this new information as true, it shows that evil situations require the active and conscious management of many people: people who are motivated by the ideals that brought them into that situation in the first place. It does not entirely invalidate the shocking findings of the Zimbardo study, but does suggest that, contrary to the rhetoric of the 'evil situation', people do not simply respond in a deterministic way to the power of the situation. At least some of the people in evil situations know they have power in and over the situation, and their deliberate actions are crucial in making the situation what it is.

Questions

1. As we saw in Chapter 1, experimenter bias – effects observed in experiments because of the expectations and behaviours of the experimenter – can be powerful and operate without the consciousness of either experimenters or participants. Of course, researchers can also influence their results by setting up experiments in ways that favour their hypotheses. Based on your reading here and, if possible, your reading of the original papers, to what extent do you think that each side may have obtained results they

'wanted' to obtain? (Note: it is crucial to point out there is absolutely no suggestion that these biases operated consciously or that the researchers had any intention of obtaining misleading findings.) What reasons are there to believe that the effects are not entirely due to experimenter bias?

2. In Chapter 1, we considered the importance of replication in social psychology and the Many Labs' Project. To what extent do you think a risk confronting this project is that null findings may emerge from these replications because, at some level, the researchers 'want' to obtain them?

EXPLORING FURTHER

Another film related to the concept of 'the power of the situation' is *The Reader* (2008), in which Kate Winslet plays an ex-Nazi guard in a concentration camp. She is facing trial for war crimes and is forced to face the atrocities in which she participated and her own personal responsibility in these situations. The film explores the ambiguities surrounding the notion of the banality of evil. Watch the film, and consider where you stand in relation to Kate Winslet's character, given what you have learned in these pages. To what extent is she evil or blameless? Can you find other films related to the themes of Milgram's and Zimbardo's experiments?

But why exactly do people conform? What specific psychological mechanisms are at play? What specific features of people and situations can breed this sort of unlikely behaviour? In the sections that follow, we break down these issues to examine when people conform, why, and if certain people are more likely to do so.

WHEN ARE PEOPLE INFLUENCED?

Milgram ran many different variations on his conformity experiments. Likewise, social psychologists have used different variations of Asch's paradigm to further examine the psychological antecedents and consequences of conformity. Unsurprisingly, Zimbardo's work has only been replicated on a couple of occasions, including the BBC Prison Study. However, from replications of studies using a similar paradigm to Milgram and Asch, social psychologists have a clearer understanding of the factors that influence when people conform and when they do not. These appear to fall under two broad headings – *contextual* factors and *group-related* factors.

Contextual factors

In one version of his experiment, Milgram manipulated the *proximity of the experimenter,* or authority figure, to the teacher and found that obedience to authority dropped significantly the further away the experimenter was from the participant. For example, if instructions were delivered by phone, obedience dropped to 21 per cent (Milgram, 1974). When no instructions were given at all, 'only' 2.5 per cent of participants continued with the experiment until the end. Studies in other domains suggest that the closer the person making the request is to the subject, the more likely the subject is to conform. For example, in field studies, Kleinke (1977) showed that people are more likely to conform to requests on the street if the requester looks at them and touches them. Research shows that social, as well as physical, closeness increases

susceptibility to social influence: adolescents are more influenced by the smoking behaviour of people who are close to them, such as friends and family (Liu, Zhao, Chen, Falk & Albarracín, 2017).

Milgram also manipulated the *proximity of the student* to the teacher. In one condition, the teacher could not see the student and was unable to hear his cries of pain. Instead, the student could only be heard pounding on the wall at 300v and 315v, then falling silent. In this condition, nearly all participants shocked the student up to 255v and 65 per cent of participants went up to, and beyond, the maximum voltage. In another condition where the teacher was also unable to hear the student's pounding, nearly 100 per cent of teachers were obedient and continued to the maximum voltage and beyond. On the other hand, obedience dropped significantly when the student was closer to the teacher. For example, in one condition where the teacher was in the same room as the student, obedience dropped to 40 per cent. In yet another condition where the teacher was asked to force the student's hand down onto an electrode, obedience was reduced (but was still high) at 30 per cent. Thus, the *immediacy* or *emotional distance* of the victim was an important predictor of compliance in Milgram's experiment.

This finding is consistent with research on the moral dilemma commonly known as the 'trolley problem' (Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley & Cohen, 2001). In this task, people are asked to save the lives of five people lying on train tracks, and findings show that people are less willing to do so by actively pushing someone onto the tracks to stop the train than by pulling a switch that diverts the train to another track on which one person is lying. As in the case of Milgram's participants, the immediacy of the victim was a key determinant of the participants' behaviour. It is easier to pull a switch to end someone's life than throw them directly to their death.

This immediacy effect may have something to do with the fact that being physically closer to someone makes us more aware of their humanity – being apart from them makes it less possible to hear their cries or witness their emotional expressions. Being closer to someone also allows us to empathize with them. These ideas relate to the concept of **dehumanization**, which you will come across again in Chapter 11. This is the phenomenon whereby groups are sometimes seen as less than human, for example when they are described as pigs, vermin or cockroaches (Haslam, 2006). Research has shown that dehumanizing a group and stripping them of their humanity allows people to justify atrocities against them (Haslam, 2006; Haslam, Loughnan, Kashima & Bain, 2008). In Milgram's and Zimbardo's studies, perhaps the distance created between the 'teacher' and 'student', or the 'guard' and 'prisoner' made participants feel that they were dealing with someone less than human, thus justifying extra levels of shock, or prison brutality.

Dehumanization Describing, perceiving or treating a group as less than human – typically by likening them to animals who lack uniquely human virtues, or machines who lack vitality.

Further, the perceived authority of the situation can influence compliance. You will remember that the original Milgram experiments were carried out in a laboratory at the prestigious Yale University. Likewise, the Stanford Prison Experiment was conducted under the auspices of the renowned university bearing the same name. For everyday people, these are situations that command authority and respect for status. When Milgram reran his experiment in the much less prestigious setting of a modest office building, compliance dropped significantly, but was still high at 48 per cent.

Similarly, the perceived *authority* or *status of the experimenter* is important in inducing compliance or not. People are sensitive to the legitimacy of the authority figure and use this information to determine whether or not it is the right thing to conform. In one rather alarming study, 22 nurses were called by an unknown physician to administer an obvious drug overdose to a patient (Hofling, Brotzman, Dairymple, Graves & Pierce, 1966). All but one of the nurses did as they were told, until they were intercepted en route to the patient. Another group of similar nurses said that they would never do such a thing. Again, you will remember that the experimenter in Milgram's original studies was dressed in a white lab coat to 'look the part' of

an authoritative and knowledgeable scientist. In another condition where an ordinary person was giving the orders, compliance dropped significantly to around 20 per cent (Milgram, 1974).

These results illustrate the power of status in predicting conformity. In general, higher status people tend to elicit more conformity (Driskell & Mullen, 1990). People will sometimes go so far as to openly reject the influence of lower status or stigmatized individuals (Swim, Ferguson & Hyers, 1999). These results also demonstrate the influence of everyday symbols and situations that people use to guide their behaviour. Authority figures wear uniforms to encourage adherence to rules and regulations. Doctors often wear lab coats and carry stethoscopes so that we appreciate their position and knowledge of medical matters (Figure 9.8). Universities bear crests to display their established status as centres of knowledge.

Corbis

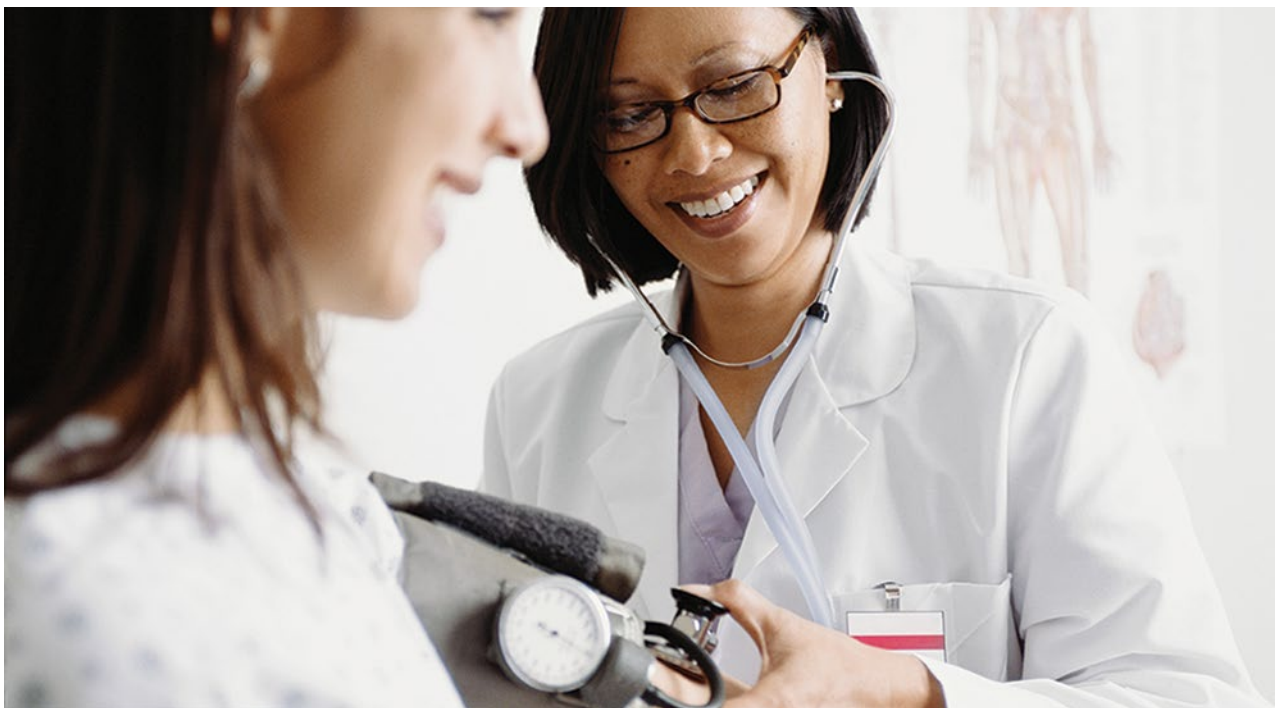

FIGURE 9.8 The 'power' of uniforms Patients are reassured by the doctor's white coat and stethoscope, seeing them as symbols of the knowledge needed to make them better.

Even the neatness of a person's appearance affects their power to influence others. For example, in one study, people were more likely to accept the opportunity to take a survey from a well-dressed person on the street than someone who was dressed poorly (Walker, Harriman & Costello, 1980). It is also not surprising that Zimbardo chose to dress his guards in uniforms reflecting their 'job'. These types of symbols of authority and status for both people and institutions are important in promoting compliance. Authority is challenged when these important markers are not present.

Group-related factors

In another version of his classic experiment, Milgram found that *group pressure* was an important predictor of conformity. In particular, if two disobedient peers, who refused to go past a certain voltage point on the shock generator, were present in the experiment then complete compliance to the task was reduced to a much lower 10 per cent. On the other hand, two obedient peers raised complete obedience to 92.5 per cent. Presumably, the presence

of obedient and disobedient others provides people with a frame of reference to judge the legitimacy of going along with the experimenter's instructions. Similarly, Asch (1955) demonstrated the importance of the *unanimity* of the group. He found that unanimous groups breed conformity, whereas if just one person in the group dissents, conformity only occurs one-fourth as often. The power of the group in the Asch line paradigm is shattered even if a dissenter is more obviously incorrect than the majority, when they are undecided and change their mind (Shaw, Rothschild & Strickland, 1957), or says they cannot the lines see properly (Allen & Levine, 1971).

In a similar vein, group cohesion, or the extent to which people feel like they are bound together as a group, also influences the extent to which people conform. Specifically, the more cohesive a group is, and the more group members are attracted to each other, the more power the group has over its individual members. For example, people who are attracted to their group are more likely to be influenced by it than those who are less attracted to the group (Berkowitz, 1954). In general, groups who are unanimous and closely bound together are difficult to resist (Nemeth & Chiles, 1988). But why might this be the case? Why is it so difficult to go one's own way in the face of a unanimous and cohesive group?

TIME TO REFLECT

Think about this question with respect to the system of trial by jury that exists in Britain and elsewhere. Are twelve heads really better than one? Are their judgements really independent? This is what Richard Dawkins (1997) has to say on the topic (see also Wilder, 1977): 'There is also strong pressure to conform to a unanimous verdict, which further undermines the principle of independent data. Increasing the number of jurors doesn't help, or not much (and not at all in strict principle). What you have to increase is the number of independent verdict-reaching units.' (See Chapter 10 for more coverage of collective decision making.)

One obvious explanation of the power of unanimous groups is that group members risk *group disapproval* by dissenting. Fear of this disapproval can force people to go along with decisions they would not normally agree with, and perform behaviours they would not normally endorse. As we briefly mentioned earlier, Asch questioned participants as to why they conformed to the group when they obviously knew that the group's judgements were wrong. Overwhelmingly, compliant participants reported that they feared the group's disapproval and did not wish to stand out. This fear of social disapproval is very powerful. Indeed, Asch (1951) demonstrated in another experiment – where 16 participants faced one erroneously responding confederate – that participants openly mocked and laughed at this single dissenting individual. The desire to avoid such ridicule and discomfort is one explanation for Asch's findings. In another experiment Asch asked participants to write their own responses privately after hearing the incorrect judgements of the group. In this study, conformity decreased significantly, to 12.5 per cent. The fear of disapproval is therefore very potent but the presence of dissenting others can empower people with the moral courage to be independent. It is much easier to stand up for oneself and one's opinions in private than in front of a group.

However, once a person has made a *prior commitment* to a decision or response, the presence of the group will rarely make them change their mind. In other words, people are much less likely to succumb to the pressure of a group if they have already vocalized a response (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). How many times have you seen a football referee change their mind after issuing a yellow card to a player? Probably none (see Figure 9.9). People rarely go back on

their decisions even when they are under pressure to do so (Saltzstein & Sandberg, 1979). This is more than just plain stubbornness. After making a commitment to a particular course of action, people lose face by reversing their decision to conform to a majority decision, even if they lose out by keeping to their original choice (Fox & Hoffman, 2002). So, more often than not, they accept the 'sunk cost' and move on. In a way, this is a means of avoiding another form of disapproval from the group – that of being perceived as weak or easily pushed around.

Of course, in the example of the football referee, this issue may be enhanced by the status of the referee as the main authority in the game. If they lost authority, the entire match could seriously collapse. This responsibility alone may make it difficult for the referee to change their mind. However, they may still moderate their judgements in later situations, so that they are more aligned with the group. For example, the referee may be reluctant to issue a yellow card next time, and a judge of a scored sporting event such as gymnastics may provide more moderate scores after noticing that their own scores are misaligned with the scores of the other judges.

Getty Images/Photo and Co

FIGURE 9.9 Will the referee change his mind? Referees rarely change their decisions once they have issued them. Once a person has made a prior commitment, the pressure of the group will rarely make them change their mind.

As we discussed in Chapter 6, people tend to like others with whom they share similar characteristics (Byrne, 1971). This similarity-attraction link can explain why people tend to conform more in settings where they like others within their group, or if they like the group as a whole. For example, when people within the group are similar (Abrams, Wetherell, Cochrane, Hogg & Turner, 1990), and when there are friends within the group (e.g., Thibaut & Strickland, 1956), conformity increases.

Perceived interdependence is another determinant of conformity. Specifically, when people perceive that their fates depend upon other people (and others' fates likewise depend upon them), and that they need to work together to reach a common goal, then

conformity increases (Allen, 1965; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). This works in a similar way to group performance effects that we will discuss in Chapter 10. Specifically, people will exert more effort on the part of a group if they perceive that their own and others' contributions to the group are important and indispensable (Karau & Williams, 1993). We also know from Sherif and Sherif's (1953) work that interdependence can increase cooperation within groups.

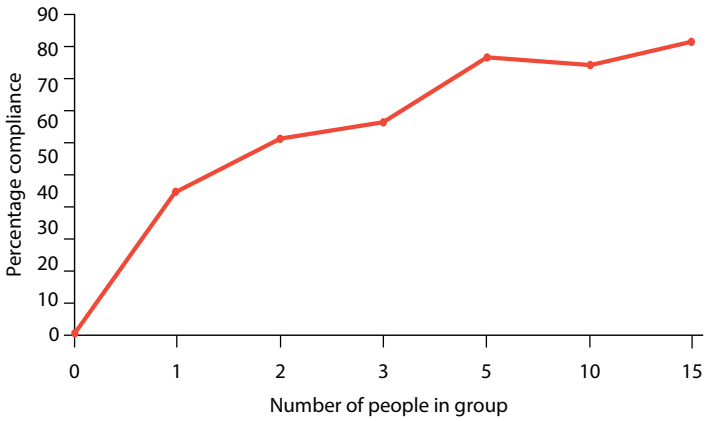

FIGURE 9.10 The effect of group size on conformity Individual conformity appears to increase steadily as a person is confronted with a group of increasing size, but after reaching about five members, a group becomes no more influential as members are added.

Source: Data from Milgram et al. (1969)

Group size is also important in predicting whether or not someone will conform, but a group does not need to be large to have a significant effect. For example, Asch (1955) found in variations of his experiments that participants who were confronted with groups of three to five people conformed more than when just one or two other people were present. On the other hand, Milgram, Bickman and Berkowitz (1969) ran an interesting experiment where they had a crowd of varying size (either one, two, three, five, ten or fifteen people) pause on a busy New York City street and look up. What did passers-by do? Results revealed that the percentage of people passing by who also looked up increased with the size of the stimulus crowd. However, compliance only increased up to a stimulus crowd of five. Groups of five or more individuals tend made no difference to conformity, as illustrated in Figure 9.10.

Further, Campbell and Fairey (1989) argued that group size influences conformity differently depending on the person's motivations and the type of judgement being made. Specifically, with matters of taste, group size has a linear effect, that is, as group size gets bigger, people conform more. This may be because on matters of taste, there is no objective standard and deviating from the group means not 'fitting in'. On the other hand, on judgement tasks where there is an objectively correct response, smaller group sizes are enough. More voices agreeing does not increase confidence or influence decision making.

WHY ARE PEOPLE INFLUENCED?

Now that we have a clearer understanding of the conditions under which people are more likely to conform, we can begin to consider *why* people conform. When people behave differently than they 'normally' would, why do they do it? Social psychologists argue that there are two general reasons why people fold under group pressure. First, they sometimes conform to avoid rejection and second, they often conform in order to be correct and accurate. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) named these factors normative influence and informational influence.

Normative influence Social influence that comes about because people wish to gain the social approval (or avoid disapproval) from others.

Normative influence is akin to 'going along with the crowd'. It is the pressure to conform to the positive expectations of other people, and the perceived 'norms' of the group (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Kelley, 1952). Individuals have a general need to gain the approval of others and, at the same time, avoid their disapproval. When normative influence is at play, people more often than not actually disagree with the influence attempt, they may not change their mind, and any influence that takes place may be short-lived (Nail, 1986). However, people

suppress their disagreement so that they will be liked (and avoid being disliked) by others. Thus, in general, normative influence is the public agreement or compliance with an influence attempt, when private views *do not* change. An important requirement for normative influence is that the individual believes that they are being watched or monitored by a powerful group. The group has the power to hand out rewards and punishments, so it is important for the individual to display commitment to the group and not stand out with a nonconformist opinion or behaviour.

Going back to the classic studies discussed earlier, it is reasonable to assume that normative influence was at play in Asch's (1955) experiments. Participants' behaviours were being observed by the group, eliciting the pressure for them to avoid the group's disapproval. Further, we know that people conformed less readily in Asch's studies when they were asked to make their responses in private. Presumably, normative influence is not as strong when individual behaviour is not being monitored by the group, and individuals are then more at liberty to make their own decisions about how to behave.

Informational influence Social influence that comes about because people wish to be correct and accurate and therefore accept information from others.

On the other hand, **informational influence** is the type of influence that comes from the desire to be correct. This type of influence typically occurs when a task is ambiguous and people are uncertain about how they should respond. It can also occur when there is disagreement among a group about the correct response or behaviour. To resolve this uncertainty or ambiguity, people look to others as a useful source of information, and compare themselves with others to learn the most appropriate way to act (Festinger, 1950). Because they are uncertain, people therefore rate the judgements of others as more credible and superior to their own judgements, which can lead people to accept that the majority view is correct and accurate. As such, informational influence is akin to 'conversion' or 'acceptance', where people come to accept the influence attempt and not simply go along with it – that is, their private views *do* change.

With regard to the classic studies discussed earlier, informational influence was probably at play in Sherif's (1935, 1937) studies involving the autokinetic effect. The task was ambiguous – the light did not, in fact, move at all and so there was no means of participants knowing what the 'correct' response ought to be. Participants therefore compared their responses with those of others and responses converged upon a group norm so that participants 'informationally influenced' one another. Alexander, Zucker and Brody (1970) followed up Sherif's study but instead informed participants that the autokinetic effect was a visual illusion. Interestingly, compliance did not occur, probably because others' responses were no longer useful as benchmarks for the correct response. The reality was that there was no correct response, so people had no reason not to believe their own responses above those of others. Thus, informational influence was not effective (see also Levine, Higgins & Choi, 2000).

StockSnap/Pixabay

Deutsch and Gerard (1955) attempted to eliminate both normative and informational influence in order to identify how much people will comply when there is very little pressure to do so. They argued that if a task is unambiguous, the participant responds privately (and anonymously)

and they are not being monitored by the group in any way, there is no reason to conform to an erroneous decision. If there is no apparent reason to comply, then why should anyone do it? Deutsch and Gerard ran an experiment where, in the first condition, a participant was placed face to face with three other people. These people were confederates who had been asked to make unanimous (incorrect) judgements of the length of lines in focal trials – in much the same manner as in Asch's original studies. In the second condition, the participant was asked to provide responses privately and anonymously. In a third condition, the participant remained face to face with the confederates but was given the group goal to try and be as accurate as possible. Thus, in one condition group pressure was minimized and in the latter condition it was maximized. Deutsch and Gerard also manipulated the participants' uncertainty surrounding the task. For this manipulation, half the participants responded while the stimuli were visible, and for the other half the stimuli were removed before participants made their judgements. As expected, when uncertainty decreased, so did conformity (see Figure 9.11). Also, when participants were allowed to give their responses privately and anonymously, they conformed less than when they were face to face with the group, which in turn invoked less conformity than the same face-to-face interaction with the added pressure of a group goal. However, when both certainty and group pressure were largely eliminated, people still conformed on over 20 per cent of responses.

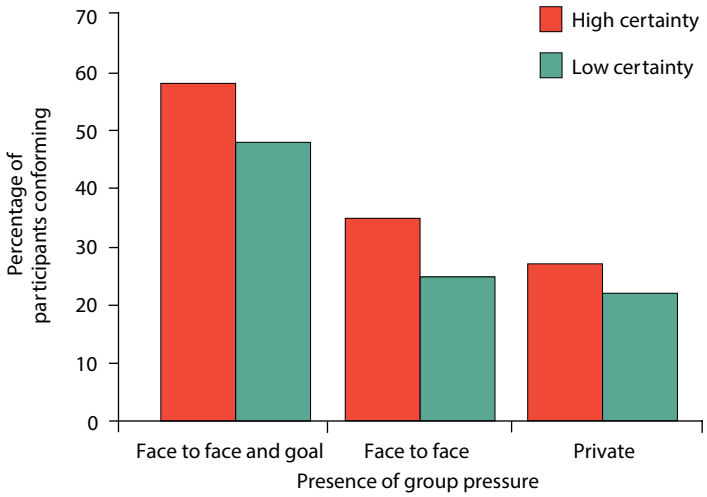

FIGURE 9.11 Influences on conformity Conformity is influenced by the perceived goal of the task (to be as accurate as possible), the degree of group pressure and the degree of uncertainty in the judgements. While conformity was lowest when there was no group pressure and the task was ambiguous (low certainty), many participants still conformed.

Source: Data from Deutsch and Gerard (1955)

This raises an interesting question. Why was conformity not completely eliminated when both normative and informational influence were kept to a minimum? Perhaps there is another 'type' of social influence that needs to be considered, which goes beyond the 'desire to be liked' (normative influence) and the 'desire to be right' (informational influence). Do we need a different perspective that uniquely describes conformity within groups? Social identity theorists have attempted to provide such a perspective.

Social identity theory and referent informational influence

Social identity researchers (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see also Chapter 8) argue that the basic distinction between normative and informational influence, which Turner (1991) refers to as a *dual process dependency model of social influence,* is inadequate for explaining social influence within groups. In particular, social identity theorists have challenged this type of model because, they argue, it underplays the crucial importance of belonging to groups and the importance of belongingness in predicting adherence to the norms and standards of the group. That is, we adhere to the norms of the group because we feel that the group is part of us (see also David & Turner, 2001). To address this issue, Turner coined the term **referent informational influence**, where he argued that people conform to the group norm simply because they are group members. This is the only precondition necessary. More specifically, people are not looking for information from others in order to be correct. Nor are they striving to gain the approval (or avoid the disapproval) of the group. In fact, they are not conforming to other

Referent informational influence Social influence to conform to a group norm because adherence to the group norm defines the person as a group member.

individuals at all – they are conforming to a group norm and can do so when they are not even being monitored by the group. People conform because they have internalized the group norm as the appropriate way to act as a member of that group.

The utility of referent informational influence to explain conformity in groups has found support within the social identity tradition (e.g., Abrams et al., 1990; Hogg & Smith, 2007; Turner & Oakes, 1989) and in studies of crowd behaviour (e.g., Reicher, 1984a, 1984b). It has also been nicely demonstrated in a study by Platow et al. (2007). Platow et al. – in this case, the additional authors were several of his undergraduate students – were interested in how referent informational responses might influence the way we react to physical pain.

TIME TO REFLECT

Before you read on, consider this question. How might a researcher elicit pain ethically and safely in the laboratory? Try to think of three or four different ways and then read on to learn about how Platow et al. did this.

Platow et al. used the cold pressor task, in which participants were asked to immerse their hand in a bucket of ice-cold water and keep it there for as long as they can. After a while, this really begins to hurt. Incidentally, this is in the 'don't try this at home' category, because after too long, it can actually be dangerous. Platow measured participants' physiological response to pain using the galvanic skin response (GSR). This involved placing electrodes on the participants' skin (not the submerged part). The more each participant sweats – a measure of physiological arousal – the more their skin conducts electricity, which is what GSR captures. An advantage of this technique is that it is non-reactive, that is, it is hard for participants to deliberately alter how much they sweat.

After the participants had done the cold pressor task once, they were asked to dry their hands and wait to do it again. At this point, a confederate appeared, posing as another participant who had already done the study and was returning a form. This confederate reassured the participant: 'Well, don't worry, the second time's much easier.' You will remember the terms *ingroup* and *outgroup* from Chapter 8 – the independent variable in this experiment was whether this confederate posed as an ingroup member (a science student) or an outgroup member (an arts student). To achieve this manipulation, separate boxes were placed in the laboratory for arts and science students. The confederate conspicuously placed their form in one of these two boxes. The upshot is, if participants thought the reassuring confederate was an ingroup rather than an outgroup member, they showed a significantly less dramatic physiological response to the pain of having their hand immersed in cold water. The reassurance of the outgroup member had no effect on GSR. This was the same as in a control condition where no reassurance was given by anybody.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Can you think of other factors that might determine people's preference for criticism to come from 'inside' a group (or can you find them by searching the literature)? Are there particular social psychological factors that you have read about in this text so far?

WHO IS INFLUENCED?

Personality

Many social psychologists have attempted to understand whether there are certain 'types' of people who are more likely to conform than others. Such investigations have been largely prompted by the existence of vast individual differences in conformity and have focused on *personality characteristics* as factors that make people more susceptible (or open) to social influence. Researchers reviewing the early work on this topic concluded that there was little evidence that personality had much influence on conformity. Mischel (1969) noted that only weak associations had been observed between specific acts of conformity and personality characteristics. Milgram (1974) himself concluded: 'I am certain that there is a complex personality basis to obedience and disobedience. But I know we have not yet found it (p. 205).'

In some studies, however, a handful of individual differences have been linked to conformity behaviours (Elms & Milgram, 1966). For example, an authoritarian personality profile displaying traits such as conventionalism, submission to authority and aggression (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson & Sanford, 1950) has been linked to higher levels of conformity (Elms & Milgram, 1966). In Chapter 11 we will explore this same personality type as a predictor of prejudice towards social groups.

In the TV game show version of the Milgram study we mentioned earlier, Bègue et al. (2015) found that obedience was higher among right-wing participants and those who scored highly on conscientiousness and agreeableness in the so-called 'Big Five' test of personality traits (Costa & McCrae, 1990; Goldberg, 1990). Highly conscientious people show self-discipline, a sense of duty and a drive to be well organized and successful. Among other things, highly agreeable people tend to be trusting, modest and kind. It might seem surprising therefore that agreeable people comply with the horrific demands of a Milgram study. However, their desire to please a person who asks them to do something may cause these often-kind people to inflict suffering on another.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Mehrabian and Stefl (1995) devised a scale to measure individual differences in conformity. Are some people more predisposed to conform than others? Complete the scale for yourself. Here, conformity is measured on a nine-point scale from –4 (very strong disagreement) to +4 (very strong agreement). A total score is computed by summing participants' responses to seven positively worded items measuring higher tendency to conform (+) and by subtracting this value from the sum of responses to four negatively worded items indicating lower tendency to conform (–). Higher values indicate a greater disposition towards conformity. Responses on this scale have been used in investigations to measure relationships between conformity and variables such as societal standards of attractiveness (Vartanian & Hopkinson, 2010), acceptance of cosmetic surgery (Swami, Chamorro-Premuzic, Bridges & Furnham, 2009) and belief in extraterrestrial life (Swami, Pietschnig, Stieger & Voracek, 2011).

	Very strong disagreement				Neutral				Very strong agreement
	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3	4
I often rely on, and act upon, the advice of others. (+)									
I would be the last one to change my opinion in a heated argument on a controversial topic. (–)									
Generally, I'd rather give in and go along for the sake of peace than struggle to have my way. (+)									
I tend to follow family tradition in making political decisions. (+)									
Basically, my friends are the ones who decide what we do together. (+)									
A charismatic and eloquent speaker can easily influence and change my ideas. (+)									
I am more independent than conforming in my ways. (–)									
If someone is very persuasive, I tend to change my opinion and go along with them. (+)									
I don't give in to others easily. (–)									
I often rely on others when I have to make an important decision quickly. (+)									
I prefer to make my own way in life rather than find a group I can follow. (–)									

Source: Mehrabian and Stefl (1995). Copyright © 1995 Society for Personality Research. Reproduced with permission

Gender

Research findings are also inconclusive with respect to gender differences in conformity. On average, studies into gender differences tend to reveal that women are somewhat more susceptible or open to conformity than men. However, Milgram (1974) found little evidence for this in his own work. He found that the same percentage of women obeyed as men: much the same was observed by Doliński et al. (2017) when they reran Milgram's studies some 50 years later (see also Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Carli, 1981). Moving beyond the constraints of laboratory research, Weinschenk, Panagopoulos, Drabot and van der Linden (2018) analysed data from a large-scale field experiment in which 344,000 citizens were mailed postcards placing pressure on them to vote in an upcoming election. Weinshenk et al. found that

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the postcards worked, in that people who received the postcards were more likely to vote. Further, it worked equally for women and men: in other words, this large-scale experiment showed no difference in conformity between men and women.

It can be hard to understand why different studies that apparently address the same research question can return mixed results. In such cases it is usually helpful to examine differences between the studies, especially in the measures and tasks. It has been argued that the experimental task is important in predicting female and male conformity; that is, what the experiment requires participants to conform to.

To test this idea, Sistrunk and McDavid (1971) ran an experiment in which the type of conformity task was manipulated. In this task, women and men were subjected to group pressure while being asked to rate their agreement with a series of traditionally feminine items (e.g., family, fashion), masculine items (e.g., mathematics, mechanics) or neutral issues. Results revealed that women conformed more to group pressure for the traditionally masculine issues, whereas men conformed more on the traditionally feminine issues. There was no difference on the neutral trials. These results suggest that even gender differences in conformity are context specific.

One factor that may matter to gender differences in conformity is feelings of uncertainty and low confidence. Cross, Brown, Morgan and Laland (2017) observed that in cognitive tasks involving mental rotation, at which men are stereotypically supposed to be better, women conformed to the judgements of confederates more than men did. This difference was mediated by women's lower confidence in the task. Compared to gender, perceived expertise and uncertainty are more likely to exert a direct influence on conformity.

However, it should be noted that women do tend to conform more than men in *public* settings such as experiments utilizing the Asch paradigm. One reason for this might be that women are more concerned with maintaining agreement within the group than men (Eagly, 1978). Another, however, is that men are more concerned with displaying their autonomy. A study by Eagly, Wood and Fishbaugh (1981) found support for this argument. Participants were asked to take part – in groups of two men and two women – in a study supposedly about impression formation in groups. The participants interacted with each other while seated individually in cubicles and for each of four issues they:

- read the opinions supposedly indicated by the other three group members
- gave their impressions of the others' knowledgeability
- gave their own opinions on the issues.

To make participants believe that their responses were being monitored, their names were indicated on their answer sheets, which were ostensibly distributed to the other group members. In the no surveillance condition, participants were told that their responses would not be distributed. The results showed that women conformed more than men only when participants thought their responses were being monitored. This effect did not emerge because women become more conformist when under surveillance. Rather, men became *less* conformist when they thought their responses were being monitored, consistent with the idea that they are motivated to prove, publicly, that they are nonconformist. Perhaps, for men, this may be perceived to be a way of winning social approval (for similar results, see Eagly & Wood, 1985).

Culture

Examinations of cultural differences have revealed fairly robust and significant differences in conformity. In particular, studies have shown that conformity (as measured using variations of the Asch paradigm) tends to be higher in 'tight' cultures such as those

displaying strong traditions (Huang & Harris, 1973; Meade & Barnard, 1973), communal social organization (Boldt, 1976) or authoritarian structure (Chandra, 1973). Further, more sedentary, agricultural groups appear to exhibit higher levels of conformity than other cultures where there are heavy punishments for nonconformity (Whittaker & Meade, 1967). Also, a meta-analytical study has shown that individualistic cultures, such as Britain, Australia and the USA, tend to show lower levels of conformity than collectivistic cultures, such as Asian and non-Western cultures (Bond & Smith, 1996). In a study of 133 replications of the Asch experiment across 17 countries, Bond and Smith showed that participants who scored high on the collectivism scale, measuring the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups (Hofstede, 1980), conformed more than people who scored low on this scale. In general, conformity was highest among collectivistic cultures than individualistic cultures such as the USA and northern Europe (Smith, Bond & Kagitcibasi, 2006).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) argue that these findings point to the fact that conformity acts as a kind of 'social glue' that binds a community together. In collectivistic or interdependent cultures, this closeness is important and social norms and relations govern behaviour. This is less important for individualistic cultures. For example, Clegg, Wen, and Legare (2017) found that adults from Vanuatu (a collectivistic culture in the Pacific Ocean), but not the USA, viewed conformist children as more intelligent than nonconformist children, illustrating how conformity is valued in some cultures more than others. This difference in views was not observed in children and adolescents of the two countries (Wen, Clegg & Legare, 2017), suggesting that cultural attitudes to conformity are shaped through the life span.

The cultural value (negative or positive) attached to conformity is likely an important reason why we see less conformity in individualistic cultures where the individual self is the primary guide to behaviour (see also Heine & Ruby, 2010; Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Vignoles, Chryssochoou & Breakwell, 2000). Markus and Kitayama's (1991) argument also brings into question how different cultures view conformity and what it means to be 'conformist'. In collectivistic cultures, conformity is seen as a positive factor promoting cohesion and harmony within the group, whereas individualistic cultures value independence and making one's own behavioural choices, so conformity is often viewed as sheep-like behaviour to be avoided. Who is right? Of course, both conformity and independence are important. Following the majority is essential for social cohesion. On the other hand, resisting the majority is crucial for innovation and social change. We now turn our discussion to situations where people resist social pressure to conform.

RESISTING SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Obviously, we do not always conform to social pressures. In fact, we often react strongly to attempts to influence our opinions and behaviours and deliberately (but sometimes also unconsciously) react in the opposite direction to the influence. This kind of negative reaction occurs in particular when influence attempts are blatant or obvious. In such situations, we feel that our personal freedom is being violated or challenged, so we react against the attempt in order to protect our freedom. People in general do not like to be manipulated. **Reactance** against influence is a way to maintain our uniqueness, uphold our own opinion or behave in a way that we want rather than what someone else wishes to impose on us (Brehm, 1966). Reactance can lead to acts of rebellion, for example a child who is ordered to tidy their room may react by doing the opposite and making an even bigger mess. A young teenager warned about the effects of smoking may smoke simply to defy parents or

Reactance
Deliberately reacting against an influence attempt.

Free-Photos/Pixabay

FIGURE 9.12 Teenage smoking: reactance or defiance? This teenage girl knows she is not supposed to smoke. Is she reacting against social norms, or perhaps defying the advice of others?

guardians (Figure 9.12). When our freedoms are challenged, we often defy convention and do the opposite (see also Chapter 6).

Ironically, reactance against blatant attempts to limit our personal freedom can be used against us. For example, some persuasive sales methods capitalize on reactance by manipulating a consumer into choosing a product they might ordinarily not have chosen, or might have casually overlooked. One neat example of this was in the successful launch campaign of South African *Destiny* magazine, where the professional female target audience was encouraged not to buy the magazine because of its 'dangerous content'. In lay terms, this process is referred to as 'reverse psychology', which can often be an effective technique. Another everyday example is how parents sometimes attempt to persuade their noncompliant children. Parents would probably agree that one way to get a child to eat their broccoli might be to tell them: 'Whatever you do, *do not* eat your broccoli.' In an act of defiance, the child may do the opposite, at least on some occasions.

EXPLORING FURTHER

In an intriguing and well-argued paper, Hodges (2014) argues against the idea that people are prone to conformity. This paper is recommended for students wishing to get a critical alternative view to many of the findings and theories reviewed in this chapter. Hodges' approach is broadly consistent with Billig's (1987) idea to advance critical thinking: that is, think about theories and findings by supposing that the very opposite of the hypothesis is true (for more coverage of this approach, see Chapter 1 on critical thinking and Chapter 14 on the bystander intervention effect). So, Hodges reviews research findings from the perspective that people's behaviour diverges from, rather than converges with, other people's, even when situations seem stongly designed to encourage conformity. The paper is published in the open-access journal *Frontiers in Psychology*, and can be accessed freely.

As we discussed earlier, features of the situation can also enable people to resist social pressure. For example, conformity in the Asch paradigm is drastically reduced with the addition of just one dissenting participant. Perhaps this gives people the social support they require to resist influence. In other words, the addition of an individual sharing an isolated person's viewpoint helps them resist the majority's influence and present their own opinion or behaviour, and there is less risk of negative consequences. However, when a person is a minority voice within a group and stands alone, it is difficult for them to dissent. This might lead to the assumption that it is even more difficult for the lone or minority voice to attempt to convince the unyielding majority that they are wrong, yet this type of social influence does occur. Many instances in history demonstrate that an individual with unique views, behaviours or perspectives (e.g., Galileo, Sigmund Freud) or a numerical minority (e.g., the suffragette movement) *can* influence majority opinion and bring about significant social change. Indeed, social change would be impossible without the innovations of such people and groups. But how do minorities execute this innovation? How do they bring about social change? These questions are answered in the next section (see also the section in Chapter 10 on leadership).

MAJORITY AND MINORITY SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Minority social influence Social influence processes whereby a minority group (in terms of numbers or power) changes the attitudes of a majority group.

The possibility that small and/or seemingly powerless minorities can influence large and/or powerful majorities was not investigated until the 1960s, when Moscovici began his work on **minority social influence**. Can a minority in a group bring about changes in the opinions of a majority? As we know from our earlier discussions, this is a difficult task. One person, or a small group of people, against a large and cohesive majority can be a daunting and intimidating position to occupy. Indeed, as discussed earlier, Asch (1951) exposed a large group of participants to one erroneously responding confederate – these participants openly mocked and laughed at him. Thus, the minority faces the prospect of some harsh treatment from the group if they choose to air their opposing views. It is also the case that groups try to resocialize people who deviate from the group in order to maintain power and unanimity (e.g., Levine & Moreland, 1994). However, invidivuals and minority groups are not completely powerless. It is clearly the case that small minorities influence larger groups. Indeed, Asch also showed that a larger minority (nine) of erroneously responding confederates against a correct majority of eleven participants was no longer openly mocked. The majority did not conform but as a cohesive group, the minority was a more serious force to be reckoned with. At the very least, minorities can force majorities to stop and think. They can raise questions about what the group is about. If they are influential enough, they will cause others to 'break off' from the majority group, orchestrating a schism (e.g., Sani & Reicher, 1999).

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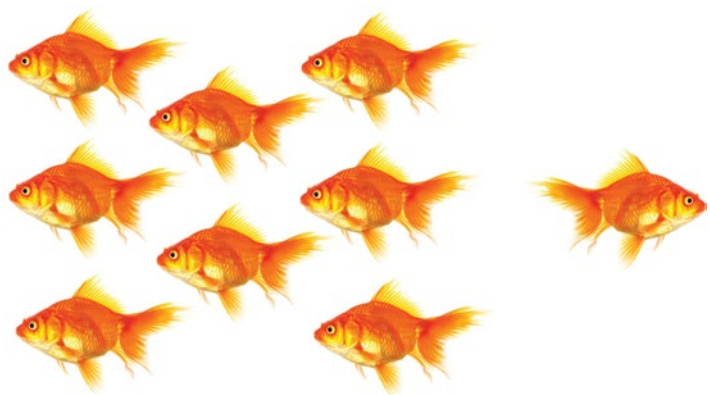

FIGURE 9.13 How do smaller minorities influence majorities?

Conversion theory Moscovici's (1980) cognitive account of how members of the majority process minority messages.

How can minorities be influential?

How can minorities exert more influence than we might think? Moscovici (1976, 1980) argued that the influence of minorities cannot be accounted for by the same principles that explain majority influence. The basic premise of Moscovici's **conversion theory** is that majorities are

at an advantage, since the power of social norms and conformity – the desire to fit in – is on their side. Majorities often have the power to coerce their audience to pay attention to their arguments and, at least outwardly, to agree with them.

On the other hand, minorities do have one important advantage: their minority position makes them stand out, and as a result they can seize the attention of the audience, at least for a while. This encourages people to think more systematically about their position (for a related dual process theory of persuasion, see the elaboration likelihood model in Chapter 6). This means that when encountering a minority position, people re-evaluate their opinions and go through a process of validation in which they try to determine whether their own view is correct. The problem though is that even when this process results in a person changing their mind – so they have been influenced by a minority – they may not want to show it. Minority groups tend to win 'acceptance' without 'compliance'. On the other hand, the majority enjoys 'compliance' without necessarily achieving 'acceptance'. This is the basic tenet of conversion theory (Moscovici, 1980).

Since conversion theory suggests that minorities' main advantage is their distinctiveness and their ability to get audiences thinking systematically, it also suggests that minorities should try to retain and exploit those advantages. Thus, they should adopt a behavioural style in which they propose a clear position from the outset, stick to it and resist social pressure to change it. In short, they must be *consistent* to exert influence over the majority. Moscovici broke this down into two components:

1. Diachronic consistency: they must display intraindividual consistency (that is, each individual must not waver in their opinion) and therefore show stability over time.
2. Synchronic consistency: they must display interindividual consistency (that is, individuals within the minority should show the same opinion) and therefore show stability across the group.

If minority members overtly change their minds or disagree with each other, they collectively lose their clear, distinctive position, and any contradictions are likely to be noticed by an audience that is thinking systematically. If, on the other hand, minorities remain consistent, the audience attempts to understand why the minority consistently holds its position, leading them to systematic thinking (see also Martin, 1996; Peterson & Nemeth, 1996). These hypothetical processes of minority influence are depicted in Figure 9.14. Much research has supported this position (see also Jung, Bramson & Crano, 2018; Maass & Clark, 1984, 1986; Nemeth & Wachtler, 1974).

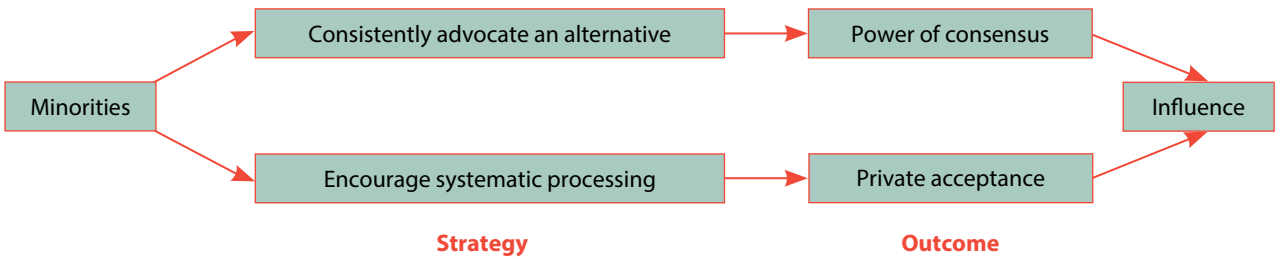

FIGURE 9.14 Mechanisms of minority influence, as explained by Moscovici's (1980) conversion theory Minorities can influence majorities if they are consistent and produce relevant evidence that encourages systematic processing. Such systematic processing will lead to private acceptance.

Moscovici and colleagues ran experiments to examine the importance of consistency. In one study, Moscovici, Lage and Naffrechoux (1969) showed groups of six participants 36 coloured slides. The slides were all blue and only differed in their intensity. Participants were

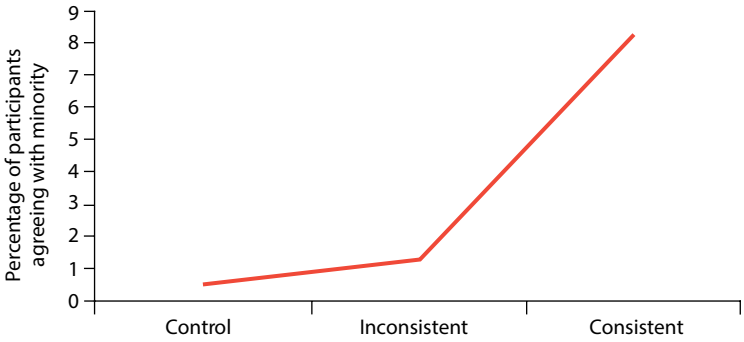

FIGURE 9.15 Agreement with consistent or inconsistent minorities
When minorities are inconsistent, people are much less likely to agree compared to when they are consistent. Moscovici et al. argued that one of the keys to minority group success was a minority's consistency.
Source: Data from Moscovici et al. (1969)

asked to state aloud what the colour of each slide was. Moscovici et al. manipulated the *consistency* of a minority within the group. In the consistent condition, two confederates always answered 'green' so that they were both diachronically and synchronically consistent. In the inconsistent condition, the confederates answered 'blue' on 12 trials and 'green' on 24 trials (the inconsistent condition). There was also a control condition where there were no confederates. Results revealed that participants committed practically no errors in the control condition and almost always correctly identified the slides as blue. In the inconsistent minority condition, only 1.25 per cent of participants gave an incorrect answer, which was only marginally higher than the control condition. However, in the consistent minority condition, 8.42 per cent of participants gave an incorrect answer (see Figure 9.15). Although not a huge increase in influence, this is significant considering the minority status of the confederates. The fact that they were consistent in their responding was enough to convince some people some of the time.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Before it was fashionable to conduct replication studies, Sorrentino, King and Leo (1980) tried and failed to directly replicate one of Moscovici's studies (Moscovici & Personnaz, 1980). Read both articles – what did the replication attempt show, and what did we learn from it?

In a refinement of Moscovici et al.'s study, Nemeth, Swedlund and Kanki (1974) included two additional conditions where confederates responded 'green' on half the trials and 'green-blue' on the other half. The confederates either responded 'green' or 'green-blue' randomly, or 'green' on the brighter of the slides and 'green-blue' on the duller slides – the latter condition being the consistent minority condition because there was a logical pattern to their responses. In this study, the random condition had no effect. However, the consistent condition led to 21 per cent of responses being aligned with the influence attempt. Interestingly, results did not replicate Moscovici et al.'s (1969) 'green minority' condition. Nemeth et al. argued that this was probably because their participants were permitted to respond with more than one colour. In Moscovici et al.'s study, the minority showed no *flexibility* when the context clearly allowed it. Perhaps they did not influence the group because they were perceived as rigid and unrealistic (see also Mugny & Papastamou, 1982). Other research shows that people often interpret the actions of minorities in terms of psychological peculiarities (Papastamou & Mugny, 1990). Consistency within the minority is therefore important, but a minority's influence is also dependent on how their consistency is interpreted by the majority.

TIME TO REFLECT

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you needed to change the opinions or behaviours of a majority group? What did you do? If you were with other people, what did they do? Was the attempt successful? Thinking about Moscovici's work on minority influence, did the minority do the right things in order to influence the majority?

Nemeth (1986, 1995) also argued that minority (but not majority) influence allows divergent (creative) thinking and innovation. According to this account, the stress that is induced when people realize that they disagree with the majority restricts divergent thinking, compared to the realization that one agrees with the minority. Social identity theory offers a perspective on minority influence too. Here, it is argued that the minority will be most influential if they can somehow frame themselves as part of the ingroup (David & Turner, 2001). In particular, a shared ingroup allows people to consider the minority as part of the group and think closely about their qualifications and credentials. In support of this view, David and Turner (1996, 1999) demonstrated that ingroup minorities achieved greater attitude change among a majority than outgroup minorities.

These perspectives argue for a *dual process* approach to social influence. Minorities and majorities exert their influence in different ways. However, Latane and Wolf (1981) proposed that a *single process* model can explain both minority and majority influence. They argued that influence is a unitary process regardless of its source (minority or majority). They proposed that social impact is a multiplicative function of the strength (power, expertise), immediacy (proximity in space and time) and size (number) of the source. In particular, impact decreases with each additional input. For example, the 20th person in a group will make less of a difference than the 19th person. Further, influence is divided across targets. This is why, they argue, minorities have less influence than majorities. They are smaller in number and their power is diffused across many targets. There is an ongoing debate between proponents of these two perspectives. Some theorists argue that the two perspectives can be integrated into a common theoretical framework. For example, De Dreu and De Vries (1996) offered a *differential processing model of persuasion*, arguing that a stable attitude shift, regardless of the source, will occur if arguments are perceived to be convincing, people have the ability to process information and they are also motivated to process information.

Other studies have shed more light on the conditions under which minorities and majorities are influential, enabling us to better understand the different processes that might be at work for majorities and minorities to exert their influence. For example, Erb, Bohner, Hewstone, Werth and Reinhard (2006) showed that actual consensus within the minority is an important predictor of influence. But this also depends on the consensus that group members *perceive* to exist. In particular, Erb et al. found that telling people there was 20 per cent consensus among a minority had more influence if this was more than expected (e.g., if participants expected only 10 per cent consensus), but less if actual consensus was less than expected (e.g., if participants expected 30 per cent consensus). Thus, it is not only the actual features of the minority that are important, but also how people see it (see also Erb & Bohner, 2007).

While we have covered the advantages that majority groups enjoy, they do have one important disadvantage: people's need to feel unique and autonomous may be threatened when they are aware that they are influenced by the majority. Imhoff and Erb (2009) tested this in an elegant study. They gave participants (students at Bonn University in Germany) a personality test followed by the feedback that they were 'exactly average'. This caused participants to reject an opinion (about the attractiveness of a holiday destination) when it was ostensibly endorsed by the majority (83 per cent) rather than the minority (17 per cent) of other Bonn University students. Studies have also shown that the need for uniqueness can cause people to adopt a

specific form of minority opinion: specifically conspiracy theories, such as the theory that the deaths of Princess Diana and John F. Kennedy were organized by a group acting in secret (Imhoff & Lamberty, 2017; Lantian, Muller, Nurra & Douglas, 2017).

Overall, it is clear that, as well as majorities, minorities can be influential, but social psychologists agree less on the exact processes that make this happen (see De Dreu and De Vries, 1996; for a readable review of research on minority influence, see Gardikiotis, 2011; for a comprehensive review, read chapters in the edited volume by Papastomou, Gardikiotis & Prodromitis, 2017).

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

The suffragette movement

Until the early 20th century, British women were not permitted to vote. Members of Parliament believed that women would not understand how Parliament functioned and should therefore take no part in electoral procedures. A minority group of women disagreed. Founded in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst, the Women's Social and Political Union (aka the 'suffragettes') began their fight for social change. Their task was not easy – they needed to convince a large and established majority to change the law. How did they do this? The suffragettes are a classic example of minority influence in action. Consistent and unwavering in their commitment to the cause, they were prepared to perform extreme acts, go to prison and risk their lives to earn women the vote. Slowly, the suffragettes forced Parliament to reconsider their views. After the First World War, the Representation of the People Act was passed in 1918 by Parliament, giving the right to vote to women of property over the age of 30. All women over the age of 21 were granted the right to vote in 1928.

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Questions

1. Many assume that the success of the suffragette movement was a 'reward' for the vital work done by women during the First World War. However, women in France (who were also instrumental in the war effort) were not similarly rewarded. Do you think this is a good explanation?
2. What might be another reason for their success?
3. Many of the suffragettes' activities were violent (e.g., arson, vandalism). Thinking about how minorities are influential, would these activities have helped or hindered their cause?
4. What other influences might the suffragettes have had? Think also about our discussion of status and roles in Chapter 8. Also take a look at our coverage of collective action in Chapter 12.

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Take a look at the Student Project on page 661 by Molly Rasch from University College London. Molly examined ways to influence people to be more active at work. She conducted interviews to study how people respond to being encouraged to stand (rather than sit) in meetings. Her research is relevant to the study of social influence in this chapter and persuasion in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have learned that people respond to social influence in different ways depending on who they are and the situation in which they find themselves. People are sometimes influenced because they do not want to stand apart from the group and risk rejection, ridicule and other negative responses from the group. Sometimes, however, this social influence can have negative consequences, as is often the case when people 'blindly' follow rules and orders. Here is a brief summary of the points covered in this chapter:

- Several conditions increase the likelihood of social influence, such as being confronted with an authority figure, experiencing group pressure and fearing disapproval from the group. Cultural factors also affect social influence, with some cultures showing greater levels of conformity than others.
- People are not always easily influenced and some conditions will actually reduce the likelihood of social influence occurring. For example, being in a group that is not unanimous or having made a prior commitment to a decision will make an individual less likely to be influenced by the group.
- There are said to be two different types of social influence. Normative influence occurs when people are influenced without changing their attitudes. Informational influence occurs when people are outwardly influenced and their attitudes also change. Research findings suggest that our attitudes and behaviours are more likely to be influenced by the groups we belong to – a process called referent informational influence.
- Of course, people often resist social pressure because they want to be unique or uphold their own opinions. People can react against group conventions or assert their uniqueness in other ways such as dressing or talking differently to other members of the group.
- Finally, minorities (individuals and group) can innovate and change people's attitudes and behaviours in order to force social change. They can do so by being consistent, clear and unwavering in their attempts to influence the majority.

Our concern in this chapter has been how social groups can exert an influence on the behaviour of the individuals who belong to them. In Chapter 10, we turn to how individuals can exert an influence on the behaviour of the groups they belong to. Individuals often collaborate in ways that mean they are effectively thinking, feeling and acting as a unit. How do they work together to solve problems, identify and pursue common goals, and even experience emotions?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. What are the factors that influence conformity within groups? Discuss with reference to relevant research on social influence processes.
2. Everyone is capable of 'evil' – it all depends on the situation. Do you agree with this statement? Why/why not?
3. With reference to relevant research, explain how minorities can influence majorities.

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Can conformity decrease antisocial behaviour?

Have you ever walked down the streets of a big city and wondered how to stop people throwing their litter all over the place? Well, making people aware of social norms is one way of reducing such antisocial behaviour. For example, seeing another person pick up litter in a car park reduces the percentage of people who throw

leaflets from their car's windscreen onto the ground (Kallgren, Reno & Cialdini, 2000). Also, Reno, Cialdini and Kallgren (1993) ran a study in a dirty car park that had litter strewn all over the place. A confederate walked by and either threw litter on the ground, or picked up and appropriately disposed of some litter. There was also a control condition where there was no confederate. In each case, the experimenters had put a leaflet on people's cars and observed their behaviour when they got back to their car. The results revealed that in the control condition, 38 per cent of the car owners threw the leaflet onto the ground. In the condition where the confederate littered, 30 per cent of car owners littered too. However, in the condition where the confederate disposed of their litter, only 4 per cent of observed car owners littered. These studies demonstrate that making people aware of prosocial norms may be a useful technique for decreasing littering behaviour.

In this exercise, we would like you to think of another example of a common antisocial behaviour and devise an intervention against this behaviour. Base your intervention on the concept of norm awareness and write down the following things:

1. A statement of the problem.
2. A description of the intervention you would introduce (e.g., what would you manipulate?) and the theoretical basis for this intervention.
3. An outline of how you will measure the outcomes. In other words, how will you know if your intervention has worked?

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources including videos and self-test multiple choice questions to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

Brown, R.J. (2000). *Group processes* (2nd edn). Oxford: Blackwell. Covers a wide range of issues in the study of group processes, including coverage of social influence processes within groups.

Griggs, R.A., & Whitehead, G.I., III. (2015). Coverage of recent criticisms of Milgram's obedience experiments in introductory social psychology textbooks. *Theory & Psychology*, *25*, 564–80. Does what it says – reviews the ethics of Milgram's experiments and the way he reported them.

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CHAPTER

10 GROUP BEHAVIOUR

In this chapter, we consider the factors that facilitate and hinder collective human behaviour. We examine how group members are influenced by each other through the processes of social facilitation, social loafing and deindividuation. We also discuss how groups make decisions and how they cooperate, experience conflict and avoid conflict. Finally, we discuss leadership in groups. By the end of this chapter, you will have learned about the factors that facilitate and obstruct collective human achievement.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Social facilitation
- Social loafing
- Deindividuation
- Group decision making
- Leadership

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Groups do great and terrible things that individuals cannot. Our everyday language reflects the wisdom that groups do things. For example, we effortlessly speak of how the Ancient Egyptians built the pyramids of Giza, Ancient Britons Stonehenge and Ancient Chinese the Great Wall. We also talk of the wrongs perpetrated by one group upon another – how one group suppresses, tyrannizes or even commits genocide upon another. Thus, we appear to assume that groups are capable of bearing collective responsibility for their actions (Branscombe & Doosje, 2004; Ferguson & Branscombe, 2014). Sometimes, they are even punished collectively, as when countries are forced to pay reparations, or companies are sued for their wrongdoings. Groups are perceived to be more than merely the sum of their parts.

In this chapter, our focus is on group behaviour and, in particular, how groups do things. In so doing, it is important to think about what it means to say that groups do things. When we say 'group X did something', we do not mean exactly the same thing as when we say 'person X did something'. For one thing, although a person may sometimes have conflicting goals, and selfhood may not be quite as unitary as we normally imagine (see Chapter 2), a person is clearly a moral unit in a way that a group is not. A given member of group X may have contributed nothing to its actions, and may even have tried to obstruct them (Lewis, 1948). For example, women may have achieved the right to vote despite many barriers, even from within their own group. A member of group X may not have even been born when it committed atrocities (Van Den Beld, 2002). For example, although Germans committed many atrocities during the Second World War, most Germans alive today were not alive when these events occurred. It is a much debated point whether such people should receive any blame (or credit) or accept any responsibility for their group's actions. In contrast, we cannot choose to punish or reward only part of a person for their actions. An interesting example is how serial killers such as Ted Bundy use as their defence the argument that they have multiple personalities and that just one personality was responsible for the murders. How does one punish a personality?

Another important point is that the human brain is the most complex structure in the known universe (see Chapter 3). Having one makes it possible for individuals to form aspirations and goals, experience emotions, have thoughts and memories, and plan and execute behaviour. Of course, groups also have means of storing and processing information, as in books, public archives, through information sharing and discussion. But these are nowhere near as sophisticated as the operations permitted by the human brain. Even if we were to allow that groups can have a mental life – an idea scotched by many scholars – it would be a much simpler and less coherent life than that experienced by individuals. Thus, when we speak of groups' mental, emotional and motivational states, we are either talking metaphorically or about states that are widely shared by their members. The behaviour of a group cannot be spurred by its mental states in the same way that a person's can.

Nonetheless, when we refer to many **group behaviours**, as in 'The Ancient Chinese built the Great Wall', we are not just saying that a number of individuals from this group built it. We are saying that those individuals were influenced by their interactions with other group members, causing them to form goals and act differently than if they were alone. In particular, these group members adopted common goals and worked together in a coordinated fashion in order to achieve them. This coordinated **group action** is the kind of group behaviour we are most interested in here. It is what allows human beings to achieve together what they cannot do alone. In this chapter, we will consider the factors that facilitate and obstruct collective human achievement. In particular, we shall examine how groups influence their members through the processes of social facilitation, social loafing, deindividuation, decision making, cooperation, conflict and leadership.

Group behaviour
Behaviour displayed by people who are acting within, and as, a group.

Group action
Behaviour by group members that is coordinated in order to achieve a common goal.

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SOCIAL FACILITATION

One way in which groups can achieve more than the sum of their individual parts is by influencing the efforts and achievements of their members. Gordon Allport (1954a) asked: 'What change in an individual's normal solitary performance occurs when other people are present?' (p. 46). In other words, how does the group influence the individual? Does the group help or hinder individual performance? Triplett (1898) was the first to investigate these sorts of questions. He observed that cyclists' racing times were faster when racing against the clock than when racing without being timed. However, he also found that cyclists made better time when racing alongside other cyclists than when racing alone against the clock. Intrigued by this observation, he set out to examine the phenomenon experimentally, where he asked children, either alone or **co-present** with others, to wind string onto a fishing reel as quickly as possible. He found that the children who worked alongside others wound faster than the children who completed the task alone.

Why did this happen? Why would children perform this task better in the presence of others rather than when they acted alone? Triplett thought that competing with others 'energizes' people and enhances their task performance. Many other experiments followed Triplett's studies, demonstrating that the co-presence of individuals improves the speed with which people perform simple mathematical and motor tasks. To this day, social scientists investigate how the presence of others improves performance on tasks such as solving anagrams and puzzles (Flynn & Amanatullah, 2012); and Gardner and Knowles (2008) demonstrated that the person present does not even need to be real – being in the 'presence' of a fictional TV character can facilitate performance on simple tasks. Other research has shown that people even eat more in the presence of other people (Herman, 2015).

Co-presence Performing a task in the presence of other people.

Social facilitation The process by which the presence of others can facilitate behaviour.

Mere presence Social facilitation effects need not necessarily be competitive. The simple presence of others is enough to facilitate behaviour.

Co-actors People performing the same task at the same time but not performing the task collectively.

Floyd Allport (1920) called this phenomenon **social facilitation** – the process by which the presence of others can facilitate behaviour. However, unlike Triplett, Allport did not assume that the context needed to be competitive. Instead, he argued that the **mere presence** of others could facilitate behaviour. In other words, all that is necessary is that other people are around, either doing the same thing (as **co-actors**) or simply watching passively. Allport also argued that this phenomenon is not just present in human beings, and research suggests he was right.

Studies have demonstrated examples of social facilitation in other animal species, specifically in the feeding behaviour of rats (Harlow, 1932), dogs (James, 1953) and chicks (Tolman, 1964). Other studies have demonstrated that a variety of creatures such as kangaroos, monkeys and horses eat more, run faster and perform other behaviours better when other members of their species are doing the same thing (Dindo, Whiten & de Waal, 2009; Pays, Dubot, Jarman, Loisel & Goldizen, 2009; Van Dierendonck, De Vries & Schilder, 1995). Recent research has discovered evidence for a neuronal basis for social facilitation. Specifically, Demolliens, Isbaine, Takerkart, Huguet & Boussaoud (2017) studied monkeys performing a motor task either as individuals or in the presence of other monkeys. They found that a specific set of neurons in the prefrontal cortex region were activated during the co-presence condition (where social facilitation occurred), but not in the individual condition, where a different set of neurons were more active. Demolliens et al. argued that this is evidence that specific 'social neurons' are responsible for social behaviours.

However, not all studies have demonstrated results that are consistent with the idea of social facilitation. Shortly after the initial discovery of the social facilitation effect, some studies showed that the presence of others actually impairs performance, for both animals and humans (for a review, see Bond & Titus, 1983). The presence of others can sometimes be so inhibiting that the phenomenon can actually become a case of **social inhibition** rather than social facilitation. For example, men take longer to urinate when someone is standing immediately beside them at a urinal than when they are alone (Middlemist, Knowles & Matter, 1976). Other findings have shown that people who are asked to perform a complex task, such as typing their name backwards, do so more slowly in the presence of other people than when they are alone (Schmitt, Gilovich, Goore & Joseph, 1986). The presence of others can sometimes be helpful but at other times is a hindrance. So, what kind of social presence is important and for what kind of task?

Social inhibition
The process by which the presence of others can hinder behaviour.

Zajonc (1965) argued that the presence of others makes people alert and sometimes anxious (see Mullen, Bryant & Driskell, 1997). Drawing on a well-established principle from experimental psychology research, Zajonc argued that this altertness or arousal enhances whatever response tendency is the dominant one – in particular, when people are anxious, they tend to do better on easy tasks (tasks they are already good at) and worse on difficult ones (tasks where they may normally struggle). Zajonc argued that this phenomenon enables us to understand why the presence of others is sometimes helpful but sometimes harmful to task performance. For example, when they are being watched, people perform well on simple mathematical tasks because these tasks are easy, whereas by comparison, they do poorly on complex mathematical tasks because they are difficult. Whether social facilitation or inhibition occurs for people therefore depends on the nature of the task they are doing (see Figure 10.1).

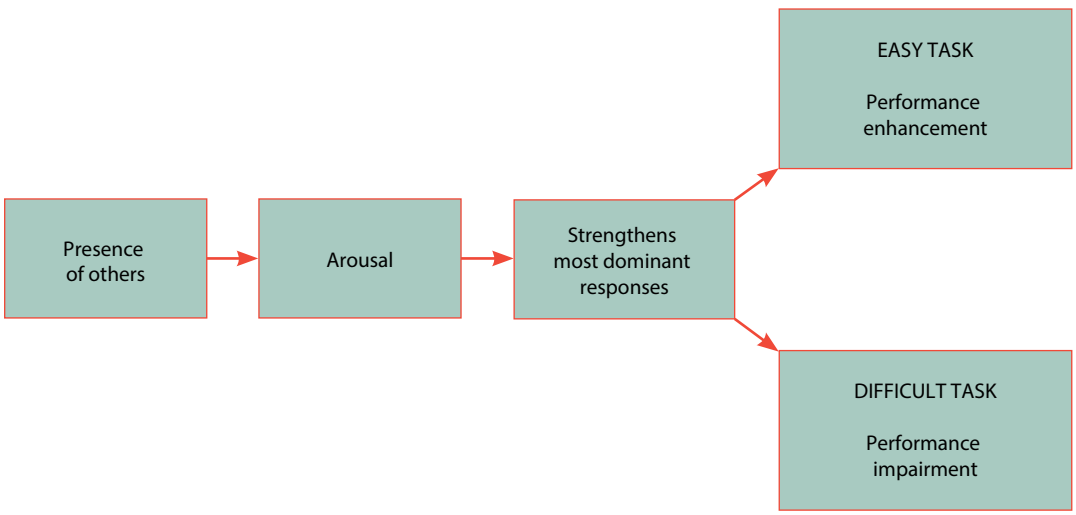

FIGURE 10.1 Zajonc's (1965) theory of social facilitation The presence of others can help or hinder task performance depending on task difficulty.

Tasks such as learning mazes are naturally difficult for people, so being watched trying to complete them does not help – it makes people anxious and they perform worse. On the other hand, completing a simple addition is easy and the presence of others energizes people to do well on these easy tasks. People have an opportunity to look good in front of others and this makes them feel good. Thinking back to our earlier example, if you were learning how to perform a difficult task like play the piano, it would probably help not to be aroused by the presence of watchful eyes. However, if you were an experienced pianist, the arousal produced

by the presence of others is likely to be exhilarating and performance-enhancing. In sports, the presence of an audience may provide athletes with that extra something to perform to their best, or to perform beyond their ability. For the less skilled athlete, however, this may trigger a 'choking under pressure' response.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Search online for examples of so-called 'choking' in sporting events. For example, what happened to Rory McIlroy in the Masters golf tournament in the USA in Augusta in 2011 when his skills seemed to abandon him? Write down a list of five to ten of these events and think about how they display some of the characteristics of social inhibition. Is this something that also affects teams of people rather than just individuals within groups? What can be done to prevent this choking response? A recent review by Gröper and Mesagno (2017) outlines some of the explanations for choking in sports and some of the intervention strategies used by athletes to prevent choking.

Later studies have supported Zajonc's theory. To give one interesting example, Michaels, Blommel, Brocato, Linkous and Rowe (1982) studied the performance of pool players in a student union. They found that skilled pool players (who made over 70 per cent of successful shots while being observed secretly) performed better (performance increased to 80 per cent) when four observers came to watch them. On the other hand, poor players (averaging less than 40 per cent of shots under normal conditions) performed worse (making only a quarter of their shots) when they were being watched. For skilled players, the dominant response was to successfully sink the balls and the presence of others facilitated their performance (Figure 10.2). However, for the less skilled players, the dominant response was to fail (they failed most of the time), so the scrutiny of others made them even worse. Other examples are plentiful. For example, people and cockroaches learn simple mazes quicker in the presence of others but learn complex mazes more slowly (e.g., Zajonc, Heingartner & Herman, 1969). Airport baggage X-ray security workers work faster in the presence of others when the tasks are easy, but more slowly when the tasks are difficult (Yu & Wu, 2015).

Getty Images/Alex Bamford

FIGURE 10.2 Being watched improves the performance of skilled pool players Michaels et al. (1982) found that skilled pool players performed even better in the presence of others but poor players did not.

Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter and Salomon (1999) found physiological evidence supporting Zajonc's theory. In this research, the presence of others triggered arousal in people who were performing a task and heart rate patterns were consistent with findings of improved performance on familiar tasks and impaired performance on unfamiliar tasks. There are other interesting effects too. For example, gambling intensity (among people who already gamble) is intensified when people think they are in the presence of others (Rockloff & Dyer, 2007). In other words, people gamble more and lose more money when they think they are not gambling alone. Some researchers have also shown that there are individual differences in receptivity to the presence of others. For example, people who are extraverted and have high self-esteem are more likely to be facilitated when behaving alone rather than in the presence of others. Furthermore, a meta-analysis by Oviatt and Iso-Ahola (2008) found that the presence of others has moderate effects on many different kinds of motor behaviours.

But why does this happen? Why are we aroused when others are present? It was generally assumed that the presence of others increases **drive**, which facilitates more dominant responses, but the finer grained processes were less clearly articulated. Research evidence suggests that there are three possible ways in which the presence of others can influence behaviour. These are mere presence, evaluation apprehension and distraction.

Drive A negative state of tension associated with an unsatisfied need, which motivates efforts to satisfy the need.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Zajonc's work has been influential in social psychology in many areas other than the study of social facilitation. Read more about his life and work. A good starting point may be *The Selected Works of Robert Zajonc* (2003).

Mere presence

Zajonc argued that nothing else about the presence of others was necessary to influence behaviour – simply the mere company of others is enough to increase drive and facilitate or hinder behaviour. This seems plausible in some examples. Specifically, why do joggers run faster in the presence of others when there is no direct competition or evaluation? They appear to be energized by the mere situation of performing their task in the presence of others. Also, on tasks where there are no 'right' and 'wrong' answers, people make stronger judgements in the presence of others rather than when they act alone. For example, people show stronger colour preferences when they are with other people (Goldman, 1967) – merely being with others makes a difference even on such simple, trivial tasks.

However, in some situations, the presence of others comes with additional features such as competition and evaluation. For example, sports are often played with others in competitive contexts and an audience is often present too, watching players' every move. Other social psychologists have therefore argued that the mere presence of others, while being important in some situations, cannot fully explain how behaviour changes in other situations. The research we have discussed so far also does not explain exactly how the presence of others makes a difference to people's behaviours. The concept of evaluation apprehension helps to explain this further.

Evaluation apprehension

Cottrell, Wack, Sekerak and Rittle (1968) observed that the enhancement of dominant responses is strongest when people think they are being watched. In an experiment, they asked participants to complete three tasks they had practised and therefore generally performed well, that is, the dominant response would be successful task performance. They were asked to complete the tasks in front of an audience who were either blindfolded, co-present but

inattentive or fully attentive. Results revealed that the fully attentive audience produced the strongest social facilitation effect. People performed best when the members of the audience were paying close attention.

Cottrell et al. (1968) argued that this occurred because the participants were concerned about how the audience were evaluating their performance. The blindfolded and inattentive audience made no difference to performance presumably because their presence did not make the participants anxious. On the other hand, the attentive audience were closely watching and this made the participants apprehensive about their performance. Wanting to perform well for their audience, this **evaluation apprehension** worked in their favour and they performed even better. Thus, evaluation apprehension can be invigorating and a positive influence on task performance. In general, the evaluation apprehension hypothesis argues that performance is determined directly by how people think they are being *evaluated* rather than the fact that others are there. For example, if you are a talented piano student, you may still be worried that your teacher, family or friends will laugh at you. At this point, however, your dominant performance will prevail and you are likely to perform at your best, facilitated by the observation of others (Butler & Baumeister, 1998; Kors, Linden & Gerin, 1997; Wallace, Baumeister & Vohs, 2005), especially if the others are supportive – for example a 'home' audience in a sports game (Allen & Jones, 2014).

Evaluation apprehension
Concern about being evaluated by observers when performing a task.

The evaluation apprehension hypothesis can explain other findings too. For example, people perform better on tasks when they are co-present with someone they perceive as superior to themselves (Muller, Atzeni & Butera, 2004), arguably because they are predisposed to compare themselves with people who perform slightly better than themselves (Festinger, 1954). Thus, the self-consciousness we feel in the presence of others can sometimes be our friend.

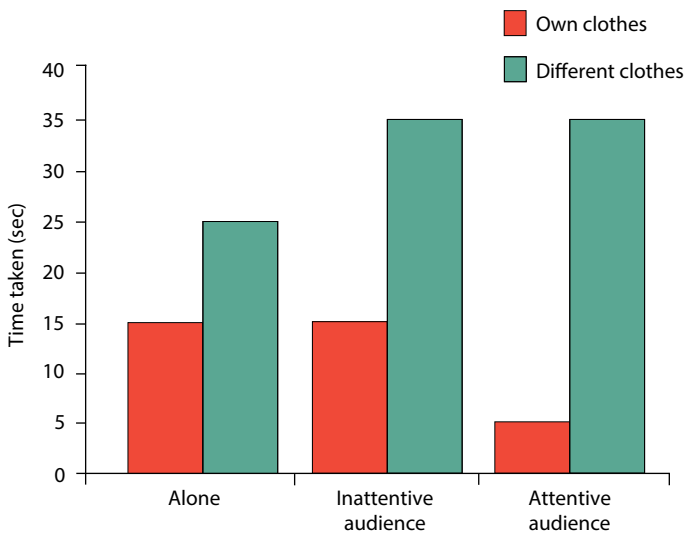

FIGURE 10.3 How the presence of others influences performance The time taken for people to dress in familiar and unfamiliar clothes as a function of audience attentiveness. An attentive audience was detrimental to performance on the unfamiliar task, demonstrating that evaluation apprehension is sometimes detrimental to performance.

Source: Data from Markus (1978)

Of course, evaluation apprehension is not always our friend. Some research has shown that when people are performing tasks, the presence of others can, unfortunately, become their enemy. For example, Markus (1978) asked participants to perform the task of undressing and dressing in their own clothes or undressing and dressing in unfamiliar clothes. Participants performed this task alone, in the presence of an inattentive audience, or in the presence of an attentive audience. Markus found that social facilitation only occurred when the task was easy (participants dressed in their own clothes). In the presence of an attentive audience, participants performed this task faster than in the presence of an inattentive audience or when they were alone. On the other hand, when the task was difficult (dressing in unfamiliar clothes), the presence of any kind of audience was detrimental to behaviour (see Figure 10.3).

In another study, de Vet and De Dreu (2007) found that thinking aloud can hinder creativity and the generation of ideas – a finding that was particularly pronounced for individuals who are highly sensitive to what others think of them and have a lower ability to adapt to others' expectations. From these findings, it seems that evaluation apprehension is sometimes helpful but sometimes not necessary for social facilitation. Even more interesting, evaluation apprehension can sometimes be harmful.

Distraction

Further expanding on these findings, Sanders, Baron and Moore (1978; see also Baron, 1986) argued that self-conscious evaluation apprehension facilitates behaviour on simple tasks but hinders performance on complex tasks because people become *too concerned* about what others are doing and how these others are evaluating their behaviour. As such, people become distracted and perform worse. This is more likely on difficult or unfamiliar tasks than simple or familiar tasks because when people are distracted, drive occurs and, as we know, drive facilitates performance on simpler tasks rather than complex activities.

Sanders et al. (1978) ran an experiment in which participants performed either an easy or difficult digit task. They did so either alone or with someone who was performing the same or a different task. Distraction was therefore operationalized by what the co-actor was doing. Sanders et al. argued that people should be more distracted by the presence of someone else if they are doing the same as themselves. They will be busy watching what the other person is doing and comparing the person's behaviour to their own. People should perform worse on the same difficult task because the potential for distraction to become a problem is maximized. Indeed, this is exactly what happened. People performed worse when someone else was doing the same thing as them. Other studies support Sanders et al.'s theory. For example, compared to more experienced drivers, less experienced drivers tend to have more accidents when they have passengers in the car than when they are driving alone (Chen, Baker, Braver & Li, 2000).

It is important to note that these kinds of effects can arise not only from the presence of others. Sanders (1981) showed that nonhuman distractors such as bursts of light can have similar effects on social facilitation. Thus, it could be argued that there is nothing uniquely 'social' about social facilitation. Distraction effects can also explain social facilitation in animals when the evaluation apprehension explanation is not as plausible. For example, it is plausible to argue that animals are distracted in the presence of other animals and that this simple distraction affects their behaviour rather than something 'social' about the presence of other animals.

Other explanations for social facilitation

Not all explanations of social facilitation involve the notion of arousal. For example, the concept of self-awareness (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Duval & Wicklund, 1972) has been suggested as another mechanism. Specifically, if people compare their actual performance on a task with their ideal performance (how they would like to do), there will be a small discrepancy for easy, well-practised tasks. On the other hand, the discrepancy will inevitably be larger for difficult or non-learned tasks. This self-discrepancy (Higgins, 1987) can motivate people to perform better, but only if the discrepancy is small. If it is too large, motivation will decrease – people will simply give up because they cannot attain their ideal. Being watched by others can increase awareness of self-discrepancy. You can probably think of examples from your own experience – when performing slightly below your standard, you may feel energized and try harder. However, when you fall well short of your desired standard, perhaps you give up and move onto something else. Other research suggests that this self-consciousness can even hinder performance on difficult tasks that people are used to performing automatically (Mullen & Baumeister, 1987).

Another explanation for social facilitation phenomena is the notion that people feel 'overloaded' in the presence of an audience and this distracts them from cues they need to attend to (Baron, 1986; Manstead & Semin, 1980). This does not matter much for simple tasks and can be advantageous because attention is narrowed to a small set of cues, thus minimizing distraction. On the other hand, performance on difficult tasks – where broader attention is required – is impaired.

These are quite varied explanations for social facilitation. Because findings are varied too, it is clear that there is no one 'true' explanation for why this phenomenon occurs. It is likely that all these factors contribute to the impact that the presence of others has on our behaviour. Bond and Titus (1983) conducted a meta-analysis of 241 studies on social facilitation, enabling them to examine the key factors in driving social facilitation effects. They found that the mere presence of individuals in these experiments accounted for only small variations in behaviour, so many other factors are probably responsible for social facilitation phenomena (see also Uziel, 2007). In particular, instead of drawing the simple distinction between 'easy' and 'difficult' tasks determining social facilitation phenomena, it has been proposed that researchers should pay closer attention to the *nature* of the task itself. Steiner (1972, 1976) attempted to devise a 'list' or taxonomy of types of group tasks, highlighting how people performing different types of tasks may respond differently to the presence of co-actors and audiences (Table 10.1).

TABLE 10.1 Classification of group tasks

Divisible or unitary?	Divisible: work is divided within the group and people perform different tasks (e.g., playing in a football team)
	Unitary: work cannot be divided into different tasks and everyone must do the same (e.g., tug-of-war)
Maximizing or optimizing?	Maximizing: do as much as possible (quantity, e.g., generating many answers to a problem)
	Optimizing: do the best job possible (quality, e.g., generating the best answers to a problem)
How are individuals' inputs related to the outcome?	Additive: the outcome is the sum of all group members' efforts (e.g., tug- of-war)
	Compensatory: the outcome is the average of all group members' efforts (e.g., group assignment at university)
	Conjunctive: the outcome is determined by the level of performance of the weakest member because every member of the group must perform (e.g., four-person relay race)
	Disjunctive: the outcome depends on how well the most talented member performs (e.g., a brainstorming group may opt for the best suggestion)
	Discretionary: the group decides on the actions it will take (e.g., choosing to vote on the best answer to a problem)

Source: Steiner (1972, 1976)

Classifying tasks on these dimensions allows us to take a closer look at how the presence of others might influence behaviour. Steiner argued that group performance is naturally worse than the sum of a group's individual potential. This *process loss,* or deterioration of group performance, is said to occur because of various factors, such as the time taken to coordinate the group, distractors and the presence of dominant group members. However, using the taxonomy given in Table 10.1, one can see that groups will arguably perform better on some tasks than on others. In particular, social facilitation occurs when people work towards goals individually and when their effort can be individually evaluated. It is important to note, however, that the personality composition of the group is also important. There is some research to suggest that variations in group members' levels of extraversion help groups perform additive tasks better, but has no impact on conjuctive tasks. Furthermore, agreeableness of the group members seems to make little difference to task performance (Kramer, Bhave & Johnson, 2014).

Another important question concerns what happens in other kinds of tasks where people 'pool' their efforts towards a common goal, and where individual effort cannot be evaluated.

For example, in a tug-of-war (a unitary, maximizing and additive task), will everyone pull as hard as they can? On a group assignment where four students are working on a psychology report and each member of the group will receive the same grade, will everyone work as hard as they can? Steiner thought not. He suggested that instead of many hands making light work, or strength in unity, certain tasks would promote laziness and decreased effort as people lose motivation to perform.

TIME TO REFLECT

Think of some examples of social facilitation. Which explanation of the phenomenon works best for each example and why? Before you read on, can you think of any examples where people might 'slack off' in groups? Why do you think they might do this? You can use your own experiences to answer this question.

SOCIAL LOAFING

Ringelmann (1913) investigated how efficient people are in performing tasks in different group sizes (Kravitz & Martin, 1986). In one task, he asked people to pull horizontally on a rope (in a similar way to a tug-of-war) while the rope was attached to a device measuring the force of the pull of the participants. Participants performed the task either alone or in groups. Ringelmann found that the amount of pull exerted by participants decreased as the size of the group increased. In larger groups, individuals exerted the least amount of force to pull the rope, such that the collective effort of the group was around half the sum of the potential individual efforts. This is known as the **Ringelmann effect** (Figure 10.4).

Ringelmann effect The observation that as group size increases, individual effort on the task decreases.

Why does it occur? Perhaps people are not coordinating their efforts optimally when they are in a group. For example, process loss could occur because people pull on the rope differently and their efforts are therefore occasionally antagonistic. Or, perhaps there is not enough room

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FIGURE 10.4 The Ringelmann effect The work exerted by individuals pulling on a rope as a function of the number of individuals in the group. Individual performance decreased as group size increased.

for people to pull to their full strength. Maybe their timing is slightly off. On the other hand, it might be the case that people 'slack off' when they know they are not accountable for their own individual performance. In other words, they somehow lose the motivation to do their best. To test these explanations, Ingham, Levinger, Graves and Peckham (1974) conducted an experiment. In one condition, they blindfolded participants and put them in the front position of the tug-of-war. The crucial aspect of this condition is that participants believed that other people were doing the task with them, but they were in fact the only person doing the pulling. Ingham et al. made participants think that others were pulling on the rope by introducing confederates standing close by who made exertion noises as if they were physically pulling on the rope. In the second condition, the groups were real. Participants were pulling and the other members of the group were doing the same. Participants performed the task either alone or in groups.

Results revealed that in the artificial groups, individuals showed a significant decrease in performance as group size increased. Remember, there were no coordination difficulties because no other people were pulling on the rope. Thus, decreases in effort could not be due to problems associated with pulling, shoving and bad timing. Instead, these decreases appear to be down to a loss of motivation. The real groups showed a further deficit in individual performance due to coordination loss, but this experiment was the first to show the real effect produced by a loss of motivation within the group. So, do many hands make light work? It appears not.

Social loafing
The tendency for people's performance to decrease in a group when they are not individually responsible for their actions.

This phenomenon has been named **social loafing** and is defined as the tendency for people to put in less effort when they pool their efforts towards a group goal than when they are individually accountable for their efforts. This is a form of group behaviour, where the group produces *less* than the sum of its individual parts. Latane, Williams and Harkins (1979) examined social loafing in different ways, for example demonstrating that the noise produced by six people shouting or clapping (with an instruction to do so as loud as they could) was less than three times the noise produced by one individual alone. In a condition where participants were asked to complete the tasks in groups of six, the amount of noise produced per person was reduced by a staggering 60 per cent. However, this could also be due in part to coordination loss. To examine the effects of motivation loss above and beyond this general group inefficiency, Latane et al. ran the experiment in a similar way to Ingham et al.'s (1974) study. They blindfolded six people and sat them in a semi-circle. They wore headphones and listened to loud clapping and shouting. On a number of trials, the participants were asked to clap and shout as loud as they could, either alone or with the group. The results were similar to Ingham et al.'s. There was a significant reduction in effort for participants in the artificial groups, with an extra significant decrease (coordination loss) for real groups (see Figure 10.5).

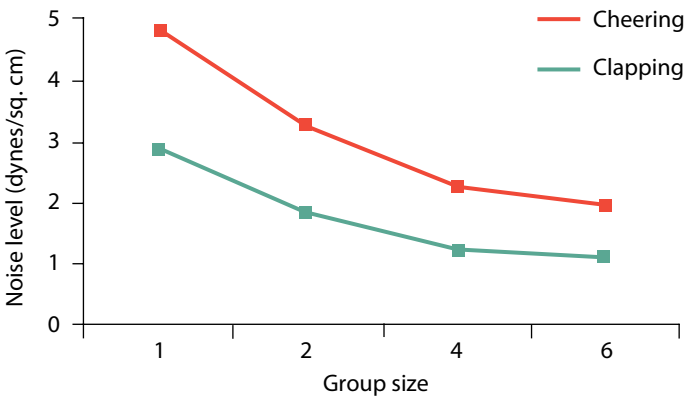

FIGURE 10.5 The social loafing effect As group size increased, the level of noise produced by people cheering and clapping was significantly reduced. This is a classic demonstration of the social loafing effect – the tendency for people to exert less effort when they pool their efforts towards the group than when they act alone.

Source: Data from Latane et al. (1979)

Thus, social loafing is a general tendency for people to take a 'free ride' when they feel that others in the group are taking on some of the task too. It has been demonstrated, even in recent years, in many domains such as in technology-supported groups (e.g., Alnuaimi, Robert & Maruping, 2010), work teams (e.g., van Dick, Tissington & Hertel, 2009), undergraduate classrooms (e.g., Jassawalla, Sashittal & Malshe, 2009) and sports teams (e.g., De Backer, Boen, De Cuyper, Høigaard & Vande Broek, 2015; Høigaard et al., 2010). Social

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loafing is also related to another phenomenon known as the **free rider effect**, where a person takes advantage of a shared resource without making their due contribution to the resource (Kerr, 1983; Kerr & Brunn, 1983). For example, someone who cheats the taxation system is a free rider because they enjoy the benefits of society without having paid any of the costs. The main difference between a loafer and a free rider, however, is that the loafer does put in *some* effort – just not as much as they should. The free rider completely exploits a situation without making any effort at all. Interestingly, the participants in Latane et al.'s (1979) experiment did not think they had been loafing – they thought they had put in the same effort in both conditions. This points to another difference between the loafer and the free rider. The loafer may lose motivation without really realizing it, but the free rider knows exactly what they are doing.

Free rider effect
The tendency for people to take advantage of a shared resource without having made an appropriate contribution.

In a meta-analysis of social loafing studies, Karau and Williams (1993) found it to be a robust phenomenon, occurring in over 80 per cent of the investigations. It happens in a range of experimental tasks from laughing and clapping, generation of ideas, cheerleading, swimming, maze learning and evaluative tasks such as rating poems. It is also a phenomenon that occurs across many different cultures, although see later for some key cultural differences (see also Simms & Nichols, 2014 for a review). But why does it happen? We know from the studies on social facilitation that the presence of others can often energize us to perform better. So what is going on here? Why does the presence of other people sometimes mean that we 'slack off' and perform below our abilities?

The main explanation for social loafing is an interesting variation on evaluation apprehension, which you will remember is the predominant explanation for social facilitation. Instead of increasing evaluation apprehension, the tasks associated with social loafing actually *decrease* evaluation apprehension. In social loafing experiments, individuals believe that their efforts are only being judged when they perform alone. Specifically, in group tasks, people are not accountable for their efforts and therefore concerns about being scrutinized decrease. Also, individuals find it difficult to monitor or evaluate their own efforts. Taking both factors into account, it is easy to see how responsibility is diffused across all group members and how social loafing occurs. In general, any situation where being in the presence of others *increases*

evaluation apprehension, *social facilitation* will occur. On the other hand, if being in the presence of others *decreases* evaluation apprehension, *social loafing* will occur (Jackson & Harkins, 1985; Sanna, 1992; see also Harkins & Szymanski, 1987) (see Figure 10.6).

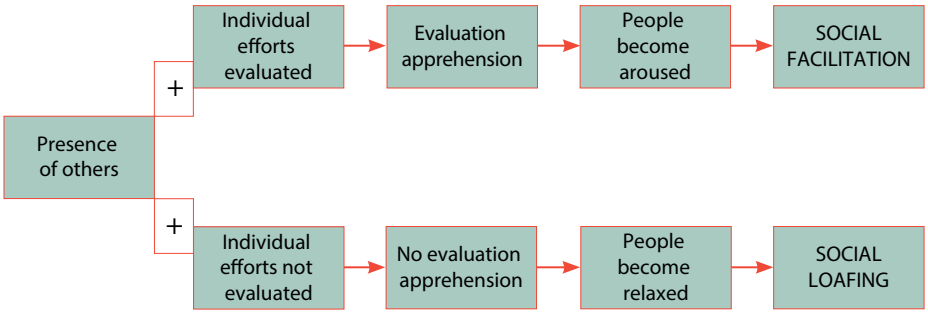

FIGURE 10.6 Social facilitation and social loafing compared Which one will happen? Typically, when the presence of others increases evaluation apprehension, social facilitation is more likely to occur, but when the presence of others does not increase (or reduces) evaluation apprehension, social loafing is more likely.

EXPLORING FURTHER

There seems to be a fine line between situations where people will perform better in the presence of others and when they will not. Some researchers (e.g., Sanna, 1992) argue that evaluation apprehension is the key explanation for both effects. What other factors might be important in determining whether people will loaf or not? Think about this before reading on.

However, the picture is even more complex, as the difficulty of the task must also be taken into account. When the presence of others increases evaluation concerns, performance on easy tasks will be enhanced and performance on difficult tasks will be impaired. When the presence of others decreases evaluation concerns, performance on easy tasks may be impaired because the individual is demotivated or uninspired, whereas performance on difficult tasks may be enhanced because of the social support provided by others (e.g., Karau & Williams, 1993; Lea, Spears & Rogers, 2003).

Output equity
People like everyone to pull their weight on tasks but generally perceive that others loaf.

There are other explanations for social loafing that implicate different psychological processes. For example, people may generally feel that others loaf in social tasks and if they do not do so too, they will feel like a 'sucker'. This **output equity** explanation is also about motivation – when people learn that others are not pulling their weight, they too can lose motivation and put less effort into tasks. For example, if people perceive that a working relationship is unjust, this can influence the extent to which social loafing occurs (e.g., De Backer et al., 2015; Murphy, Wayne, Liden & Erdogan, 2003). Perhaps you can think of a time when you worked with someone who did not sufficiently contribute to a task. Perhaps you felt so annoyed by this that you withheld your full participation from the task. Nobody would blame you because nobody likes being taken advantage of. Sometimes too, people might loaf because they have no clear standard to work with – they simply do not know how hard they need to work. The presence of a clear standard should reduce social loafing, and findings suggest this is the case (Harkins & Szymanski, 1988; Szymanski & Harkins, 1987).

Whatever the exact mechanism (or combination of mechanisms) responsible for social loafing, one obvious strategy to combat it is to make individual group performances identifiable. This

increases evaluation apprehension, makes everyone's output transparent and makes the standard clear. Indeed, it has been found that swimmers perform faster in relay races when someone closely monitors and announces their individual times (Williams, Nida, Baca & Latane, 1989). The swimmers are accountable and therefore responsible for the amount of effort they put into the team (Figure 10.7). They also know what the general standard is from the performances of their teammates. Finally, they know how much effort other members of their team are putting into the task. These all mean good things for team performance. People raise their game and perform as well as they possibly can.

Image Source/Corey Jenkins,Thomas F. Bubrick

FIGURE 10.7 How fast will they swim? Will these swimmers swim faster when they are accountable for their times? Research on the influence of accountability on social loafing effects suggests they will.

Another option is to take responsibility and accountability out of the equation altogether. For example, you may have noticed that many restaurants now charge large groups of diners a fixed gratuity rate rather than allowing everyone to tip individually. Presumably, this strategy has been put in place because it is expected that diners in a large group will engage in social loafing and tip disappointingly (Boyes, Mounts & Sowell, 2004).

Evidence suggests that people will also loaf less when the tasks themselves are challenging, appealing or involving (Karau & Williams, 1993). When tasks are challenging, people may feel that their own individual efforts are indispensable. Also, if they feel that others are not putting in the required amount of effort, people may even compensate for their shortcomings by putting in even more effort to make up the gap (Simms & Nichols, 2014; Williams & Karau, 1991). Further, if a task is appealing and there is the possibility of a reward in exchange for effort, people tend to work harder (Harkins & Szymanski, 1987; Shepperd & Taylor, 1999). It therefore makes a lot of sense that social loafing is not a big problem in high-level competitive team sports. The task is too engaging and the outcome too important to loaf.

Values, personality, gender and culture

Research has also demonstrated that people loaf less when they value the group with whom they are interacting. In particular, loafing is reduced when group members are friendly with, or identify with, one another (Karau & Williams, 1997; Lam, 2015; Worchel, Rothgerber, Hart &

Butemeyer, 1998). Thus, perhaps one way to ensure that a university group assignment runs as smoothly as possible would be to work with friends, or at least with people who share things in common. This example parallels findings demonstrating that people work harder when there is a general spirit of commitment to the 'team' (Hackman, 1986). Other interesting findings have emerged in relation to values and personality differences. For example, Smrt and Karau (2011) showed that social loafing is moderated by participants' level of Protestant work ethic (PWE). The researchers pretested participants' PWE and then asked them to work either coactively (in the presence of others, but independently) or collectively on a task of generating ideas. It was found that the higher participants were in PWE, the less likely they were to loaf when working collectively. Higher levels of 'mental toughness' are also associated with lower levels of social loafing (Haugen, Reinboth, Hetlelid, Peters & Høigaard, 2016). Social loafing is also influenced by narcissism. In particular, Woodman, Roberts, Hardy, Callow and Rogers (2011) showed that high narcissists were less likely to loaf, especially when their behaviour was being explicitly monitored. Presumably, the narcissists put in more effort when they knew their performance was going to be identified and they would be personally credited for their contribution. The performance of people low in narcissism was not affected by being monitored.

There are also cultural differences in social loafing phenomena. Some studies have demonstrated the cultural generality of social loafing after conducting studies in countries such as Japan, Thailand and India (e.g., Gabreyna, Wang & Latane, 1985). However, many later studies have shown that Western cultures (e.g., the UK, the USA, Australia) tend to show more social loafing in laboratory tasks than Eastern cultures (e.g., China, Japan; Karau & Williams, 1993; Kugihara, 1999). In general, individualist cultures tend to display more social loafing than collectivist cultures (Klehe & Anderson, 2007). In an organizational setting too, Earley (1989) asked American and Chinese management trainees to perform a task under conditions of low or high accountability and low or high responsibility. It was found that the Chinese sample exhibited less social loafing than the American sample. Perhaps these results are not surprising if we consider the importance of social bonds and social cohesion in collectivist versus individualist cultures. Letting one's friends and family down is simply not part of the mindset of collectivist cultures, so it stands to reason that less 'slacking off' might be witnessed in such cultures.

With respect to gender, women generally tend to exhibit social loafing less than men (Karau & Williams, 1993; Kugihara, 1999). Gabrenya et al. (1985) found consistent gender differences – with women exhibiting lower social loafing than men – in both Chinese and American samples. They also found that while males tended to increase their tendency to loaf as they got older, females' social loafing remained constant. Thus, while loafing appears to exist in both genders, it is lower for women, and for men, the tendency may be dependent on the situation. It is argued that this difference occurs because women are generally more collectivist than men (e.g., Earley, 1989, 1993) and therefore social loafing is against their values, at least compared to men (Gabrenya et al., 1985).

To sum up our discussion of social loafing, groups sometimes perform poorly compared to individuals, but this is not always the case. If the conditions are right, group task performance can be ideal. In an open, accountable group engaging in a challenging, appealing and involving task, groups can be arousing and exciting, and will often outperform individuals. In such a case, the group really does function effectively. But let us now consider another common situation for groups. From the social loafing research, we know about the importance of accountability within groups for completing tasks effectively. We also know from the social facilitation research that groups can arouse people. What happens when both these features of group interaction are put together? For example, how do people behave in crowds when they are often in an intense situation with a large number of people? How might people behave with the reduced level of accountability experienced when they communicate on the Internet? We now turn our discussion to the phenomenon of deindividuation.

EXPLORING FURTHER

If you talk to people about social loafing, most will say they have been at the receiving end of it but few will admit to being responsible for it themselves. This is an example of a classic self-other bias discussed in Chapter 3. Of course, everyone has, at some time, 'slacked off' in a group task. The existence of social loafing can be demonstrated in a simple task you can try on your friends. Ask a group of friends to divide into two groups of four or five people and get each group to sit in a tight circle so that they cannot see or hear what the other group is doing or being told. Give each person in each group a copy of something mundane to copy down, such as entries from a phone book. Each person also receives a number of slips of paper and a pen. Tell each group they have 10 minutes to write down as many entries as possible. At this point, the group task differs. One of the groups is to hand their completed slips into the middle and the group's number will be counted – no individual tallies will be known to the group (group condition). The other group's members are to keep their own personal slips, which will be tallied at the end, so that each person is accountable to the group for the number of responses they produce (individual condition). It is important that each group is not aware of the instructions given to the other group. At the end of the task, you would expect participants in the individual condition to have produced more slips than those in the group condition, as evidence of social loafing occurring when group members are not accountable for their input. Did this happen? How did your friends feel if they found out that they were, indeed, social loafers? (Note: this task was adapted from the Everton social loafing task, http://siopwiki.wikifoundry.com/page/Everton+Social+Loafing.)

DEINDIVIDUATION

Crowd behaviour

The first ideas generated about groups, accountability and selfhood came through a consideration of crowd behaviour. It was thought that crowds were a unique kind of group that arouse people (the same as other groups) but at the same time diffuse people's sense of responsibility. Putting these aspects together, what might be the consequences? The outlook could appear to be quite grim. Many examples of crowd behaviour come immediately to mind that help us think about this issue. Looting, rioting, lynching and bystander apathy are all examples of crowd behaviour. Why would people do such things? No doubt some of the features of human aggression (as we will discuss in Chapter 13) come to play in such situations. But is there something fundamental about groups that can bring about this kind of behaviour? Also, it is important to note that we should not focus only on the bad things that crowds do, even though this is largely the focus of research on deindividuation. Indeed, gentle protests and demonstrations, festivals and celebrations are also examples of large group behaviour. Why do people do these sorts of things? What is the common theme shared by all these behaviours?

One of the earliest theories of crowd behaviour, or collective behaviour, was proposed by French researchers Gabriel Tarde (1890) and, more notably, Gustave Le Bon ([1908]1986). Le Bon's ideas have been instrumental in the formation of the theories of crowd and collective behaviour that we know today (e.g., Drury & Reicher, 1999; Reicher, 1987, 1996, 2001; Reicher, Spears & Postmes, 1995; Spears & Postmes, 2015; Vilanova, Beria, Costa & Koller, 2017). Le Bon observed and read stories of revolutionary crowds in the 1848 revolution in France and during the Paris Commune of 1871. Le Bon argued that people in crowds behave in a primitive, base manner because they are anonymous, and in being anonymous, they lose personal responsibility for their actions. Further, through a process known as **contagion**, ideas spread unpredictably (and quickly) through the crowd. Finally, Le Bon argued that while everyone has antisocial motives at some stage, much of the time they remain in the unconscious, but, unleashed by a

Contagion Le Bon argued that this process leads to ideas being 'spread' unpredictably and rapidly through crowds.

Monjiro/Fotolia.com

FIGURE 10.8 Large group behaviour
What are some of the common features of large group behaviour? The study of deindividuation examines how people behave in arousing situations where personal responsibility is diffused.

process of suggestion (similar to hypnosis), these antisocial tendencies are expressed in the crowd. Freud took this last idea further by proposing that the crowd unlocks the unconscious and that a powerful leader can become a 'hypnotist', controlling people's unconscious impulses and turning them into a horde of savages. Similar ideas were put forward by McDougall (1920), who argued that the crowd was suggestible and easily swayed by emotional impulses such as fear and anger.

More recently, social psychologists have drawn upon Le Bon and McDougall's ideas to devise a theory to explain the unrestrained and deregulated behaviour that occurs within groups. Relying less on emotional explanations, much of social psychological thinking about collective behaviour focuses on the loss of accountability presented by the group situation. According to this perspective, being 'lost' in a group means a loosening of constraints on behaviour. Festinger, Pepitone and Newcomb (1952) argued that when people behave one way in groups and another way as individuals, they do so because they are in a state of **deindividuation**. This state is defined as the tendency for people in groups to abandon normal constraints on their behaviour, lose a sense of their individuality and responsibility, and consequently behave in ways they normally would not. The term 'deindividuation' implies that this kind of behaviour is the opposite of **individuation** or the process of differentiation between people. People lose their sense of self or their identity and succumb to other influences.

Deindividuation
The tendency for people in groups to abandon normal constraints on their behaviour, lose a sense of their individuality and responsibility, and behave in ways they normally would not.

Individuation
The process of differentiating between people. This is essentially the opposite of deindividuation.

Zimbardo (1970) further developed the concept of deindividuation. He focused on the effects of the so-called 'cloak of anonymity' provided by the group. He argued that being shielded by this cloak takes away individuals' responsibility for their actions. They lose a sense of their identity and also lose their concern for social evaluation. This state of deindividuation leads them to behave in impulsive and deregulated ways; that is, they behave differently within the group than how they would act alone.

Research suggests that large groups elicit more deindividuated behaviour than smaller groups. Mullen and colleagues' research on lynch mob atrocities is a good example of this. Mullen (1986) examined newspaper accounts of 60 lynchings of African American people occurring between 1899 and 1946. He found that as the lynch mob got larger, the more willing its members became to commit the worst kinds of atrocities against their victims. Leader, Mullen and Abrams (2007) also demonstrated that as the size of the group increases, so does its level of violence. Apart from being immersed in a group, what specific factors influence this state of deindividuation? According to Prentice-Dunn and Rogers (1982, 1983), there are two types of environmental cues that contribute to this state. These are attentional cues and accountability cues.

EXPLORING FURTHER

The 1862 novel *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo tells the story of Jean Valjean who, after being convicted for stealing bread, spends his life on the run from the police officer Javert. This pursuit consumes the lives of both men and Valjean becomes involved in the student revolutionary crowds in early 19th-century France. Take a look at how the crowds were depicted in this novel (or the 1998 film, the stage musical and 2012 film adaptation of the musical, or the 2018 BBC television adaptation) for an interesting take on crowd behaviour.

Attentional cues

Attentional cues Features of the environment that draw attention away from the self.

The first kind of cue identified by Prentice-Dunn and Rogers (1982, 1983) are **attentional cues** – features of the environment that draw attention away from the self. Drawing on Duval and Wicklund's (1972) theory of objective self-awareness (awareness of the self as an object of attention, see Chapter 2), Diener (1980) argued that features of the environment that shift attention away from the self are deindividuating. When people's self-awareness is reduced, they find themselves in a 'deindividuated state', where they respond less to established standards of conduct and instead react to the immediate situation (Diener, 1980). Normal standards slip and people act on impulse. Thus, in a crowd, for example, people may become absorbed in the environment and attend less to themselves and their behaviour within it. As we have noted earlier, this impulsive behaviour need not always be negative, but, according to this perspective, deindividuation does make the path clear for antisocial behaviour.

A good example of an attentional cue is intense environmental stimulation. Studies have shown experimentally that groups of people who were placed in highly stimulating environments (with features such as loud music and colourful video games) were more extreme, disinhibited and aggressive in their actions (Diener, 1979; Prentice-Dunn & Rogers, 1980; Spivey & Prentice-Dunn, 1990). Such features are often present in crowds, so it is easy to link this perspective to crowd behaviour.

TIME TO REFLECT

Can you remember a time when you felt 'swept away' by a situation? What were the characteristics of that situation and can you map them onto some of the situations characteristic of deindividuated contexts?

Accountability cues Factors that determine what behaviours people can 'get away with' in a social context.

An alternative way to look at deindividuation and self-awareness is to distinguish between two kinds of self-awareness: public (how one wants others to view the self) and private (attitudes, thoughts, emotions and other private features of the self; see Carver & Scheier, 1981; Scheier & Carver, 1981). Using this perspective, a loss of both aspects of self-awareness will lead to a state of deindividuation. Thus, for example, becoming less concerned with one's appearance to others in a crowd and becoming less aware of one's own attitudes may influence behaviour. However, antisocial behaviour is more likely to emerge when public self-awareness is lowered and people become less aware of social norms of conduct. A loss of private self-awareness need not lead to antisocial behaviour unless the salient norm is to behave antisocially.

Photo by Javardh on Unsplash

Accountability cues

Accountability cues may determine what people think they are able to get away with. When accountability is low, people may choose to engage in behaviours that are gratifying but would normally be inhibited. The most studied effect on deindividuation is *anonymity*. Imagine that you are allowed to be invisible for a day. What would you do? When a group of US college students were asked to answer this question anonymously, most responses involved criminal activities and the most common response was to 'rob a bank' (Dodd, 1985).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Sometimes it is difficult to believe findings such as those of Dodd (1985). Would people really want to rob a bank if they were invisible for a day? Perhaps people would respond differently if they were asked to indicate their identity instead of responding anonymously. You can try this for yourself. The next time you are in a large group of friends or acquaintances, ask them to write down, on a piece of paper, what they would do if they were invisible for 24 hours. On half of the pieces of paper, tell your friends that their responses will be completely anonymous. On the other half, ask your friends to write down their name alongside their answer. Take the pieces of paper and read out your friends' answers. This is like a game – your friends will laugh when they hear what others have to say. So, what did they say? Were the responses largely related to antisocial activities? Did the anonymous responses differ from the identifiable responses? How does this map onto the findings of deindividuation research?

Other research highlights the effects of anonymity on deindividuation. For example, Festinger et al. (1952) found that participants made more negative comments about their parents when they were placed in a dim room and were asked to wear grey lab coats than those in a control condition. Further, when placed in similar clothing (and so were unidentifiable), participants in a study by Singer, Brush and Lublin (1965) used more indecent language to discuss erotic literature than did identifiable individuals. Zimbardo (1970) investigated this effect further. He ran a series of experiments where participants were asked to wear cloaks and hoods (similar to the Ku Klux Klan) in a deindividuated condition, or normal clothing in a control condition. In one study, female participants were asked to administer shocks to a female confederate in a paired associate learning task. The deindividuated participants delivered shocks that were twice the duration of participants in the control condition. Note that just as in the Milgram study that we discussed in Chapter 9, the shocks were not real, but the importance of the findings is that the participants *thought* they were real. Zimbardo also ran the now infamous Stanford Prison Experiment featured in Chapter 9 (Zimbardo, Haney, Banks & Jaffe, 1982). Importantly for our discussion of deindividuation, the prison guards were protected, to some extent, by their uniforms. This anonymity was arguably the major contributor to their behaviour – the guards were physically brutal to their prisoners who were also deindividuated.

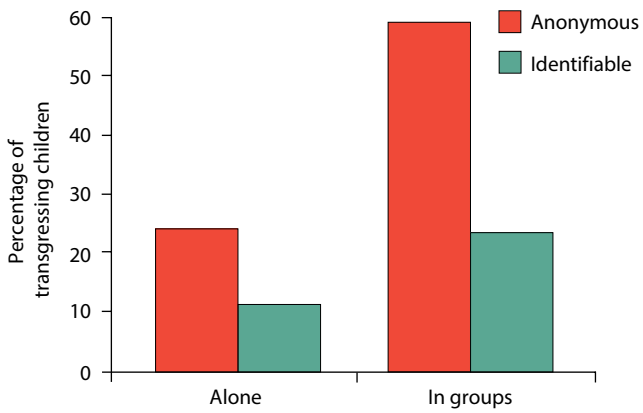

FIGURE 10.9 Two principles of deindividuation: groups and accountability Children transgressed more when they were in groups than when they were alone but even more when they were anonymous. This study demonstrates two principles of deindividuation – it is fostered in the presence of others (group) and when people lack accountability.

Source: Data from Diener et al. (1976)

In another novel study, Diener, Fraser, Beaman and Kelem (1976) demonstrated the effects of being in a group *and* being anonymous at the same time. At Halloween, they observed children trick-or-treating in Seattle, USA. The children (either alone or in groups) approached homes where they were asked to take *one* of the sweets. The experimenter then left the room and a hidden camera observed how many sweets the children took. Results revealed that children in groups were twice as likely to break the rules by taking more than one sweet than children who were alone. This effect was further enhanced when the children's identity was unknown versus when the experimenter asked the children their names and where they lived (see Figure 10.9).

However, the loss of personal identity does not always lead to antisocial behaviour, suggesting that anonymity may interact with other features of the environment – sometimes this will lead to bad

behaviour and sometimes it will not. For example, Zimbardo (1970) used his deindividuation paradigm with participants who were Belgian soldiers. Here, he found that the soldiers gave shocks of shorter duration when dressed in cloaks and hoods than when dressed in uniform. Zimbardo argued that the group was already deindividuated because they were wearing uniforms, and the addition of the cloak and hood had the counterintuitive effect of reducing deindividuation. Other studies, however, suggest an alternative explanation. In particular, a study by Johnson and Downing (1979) demonstrated how being anonymous can sometimes make people act more prosocially. In their experiment, half the female participants were dressed in clothing similar to that worn by members of the Ku Klux Klan, while the other half were dressed in nurses uniforms. Within each group, half were personally identifiable and half were anonymous. They were then asked to increase or decrease the intensity of electric shocks given to another female participant who had previously behaved obnoxiously. Results revealed that participants in the Ku Klux Klan clothing increased the shock level, regardless of whether they were anonymous or identifiable. On the other hand, participants dressed as nurses decreased shock intensity four times more often when they were anonymous (Figure 10.10).

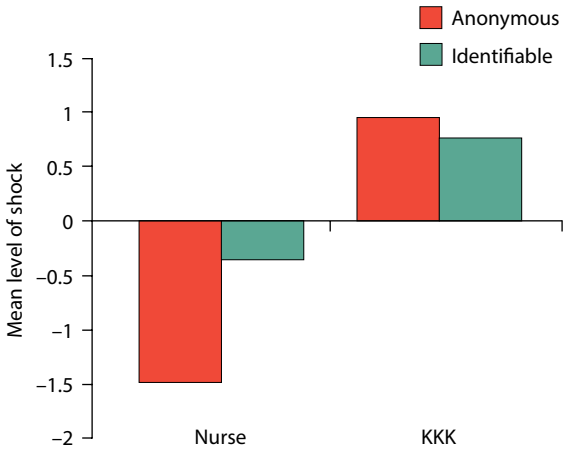

FIGURE 10.10 Effects of anonymity and costume on antisocial behaviour Participants dressed in Ku Klux Klan-style outfits shocked their target regardless of their identifiability, but anonymous participants dressed as nurses decreased their shocks (possible range of −3 to +3). Why do you think this happened? Try to answer before reading on.

Source: Data from Johnson and Downing (1979)

These findings are interesting because they demonstrate that sometimes being unaccountable or less self-aware can have positive consequences. Apart from bringing out people's less desirable tendencies, unaccountability can make people more sensitive to the needs of others. It has been argued that exactly how a person reacts to their lack of accountability depends on the norms of the group that directly surround the individual. Taking Johnson and Downing's (1979) example, one might expect generally high levels of aggressive behaviour from people wearing Ku Klux Klan outfits because aggression arguably fits the norm for Ku Klux Klan members. On the other hand, this norm is inconsistent with expectations of nurses, who are expected to be kind and caring. Thus, it makes sense that people who are immersed in the role of nurse would perform prosocially and decrease the level of electric shock. This account also explains why the Belgian soldiers in Zimbardo's study were more aggressive in uniform, where it is arguably normative for them to be aggressive.

Deindividuation: necessarily a process of loss?

Now that you have read about the various different accounts of deindividuation, read the Critical Focus box below on **emergent norm theory** (Turner & Killian, 1987). This theory has been influential in social psychologists' efforts to understand crowd behaviour, and deindividuated behaviour more generally, and argues that rather than being driven by randomness, crowd behaviour is driven by norms. The view of the 'random' crowd is less commonly held among social psychologists and sociologists nowadays as they more fully consider the motivations for crowd formation and crowd behaviour. Although current conceptualizations of crowd behaviour take issue with some of the features of emergent norm theory (again, see the Critical Focus box), they agree that crowd behaviour is driven by norms and is therefore not merely the result of chaotic and contagious situations).

Emergent norm theory Theory of crowd behaviour which argues that rather than being a product of randomness and process loss, behaviour in crowds is a result of social norms.

Another common feature of the deindividuation accounts discussed so far is that they each explain deindividuation as a result of losing an important aspect of the self. For example, people lose a sense of their individuality when they are in a crowd. They lose self-awareness. They lose

a sense of their own identity, which leads to a loss of rational behaviour. However, Johnson and Downing's (1979) findings above suggest something different. Specifically, the norms associated with a particular context might matter. The **social identity model of deindividuation effects (SIDE)** took these findings further and argued for a different perspective on deindividuation (Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007; Reicher, Spears & Postmes, 1995; Spears, 2017; Spears & Postmes, 2015). SIDE proposes that all the focus on 'loss' restricts the kinds of behaviours that social psychologists can explain. Instead, the focus should be on *change* from personal identity to social identity, or even *increased awareness,* or *group consciousness.* The SIDE model drew on principles from social identity theory (see Chapter 8) and argues that features of the context, such as anonymity, have the consequence of 'submerging' people within a group and enhancing their social identity. As a result, individuals conform more to group norms rather than individual standards of behaviour when people within the group are anonymous to one another. The consequences of this depend on what the norms are. If, for example, a group's sense of 'us' is defined by hatred and prejudice towards another group, then deindividuation will have negative consequences. On the other hand, if a group defines itself in terms of its kindness and charity, then the outcome will be positive.

Social identity model of deindividuation effects (SIDE)
Theory of deindividuation phenomena arguing that such phenomena are largely a result of increased group focus rather than a loss of individual focus.

Therefore, according to emergent norm theory and the more recent SIDE model, deindividuation is not all bad – it depends entirely on the context and standards of the group. Much research supports this position. In particular, a meta-analysis of 60 studies by Postmes and Spears (1998) supports the argument that being anonymous makes people more focused on the group than the self, and people become more responsive to the norms of the group. Whether the norms are positive or negative will determine the outcome. We discussed research investigating the principles of the SIDE model in relation to communication in Chapter 5.

EXPLORING FURTHER

You may recall some of the media commentary on the London riots of August 2011. The looters and rioters were said to be performing 'mindless' acts of violence and criminality. Is this fair? What would different theorists say about the rioters' behaviours? You may wish to read the perspectives of social psychologists Clifford Stott and Stephen Reicher, who wrote a commentary in *The Psychologist* in October 2011 and have conducted qualitative research on the behaviour of people during the riots, and both police and media reports of these events (e.g., Stott et al., 2018; Stott, Drury & Reicher, 2016). You may also wish to explore their work further, including the research by John Drury, on topics such as football hooliganism (Stott, Hutchison & Drury, 2001), policing of 'public disorder' (Drury, Stott & Farsides, 2003) and behaviour during emergencies (Drury, 2018), who all take a social identity perspective on crowd behaviour.

CRITICAL FOCUS

Emergent norm theory: a theory of crowd behaviour

Throughout history, crowds have been seen as dangerous, unpredictable, chaotic, threatening and inhuman. In the 19th century, industrialization and urbanization gave the masses more chances to congregate. Scholars such as Le Bon continued to emphasize the irrational and chaotic aspects of crowd behaviour. However, in the 20th century, scholars realized that there was a method to crowds' apparent madness. The behaviour of even violent crowds is seldom entirely random. Emergent norm theory was one of the most important theories to elaborate on this idea. Turner and Killian (1987) assumed that instead of being determined by randomness, social behaviour is

driven by norms. Specifically, they suggested that in extraordinary circumstances, such as in certain types of crowds, the mundane norms that govern the course of our everyday lives no longer apply. New norms are created by the crowd. Initial uncertainty is reduced as people get together and develop a shared understanding of the situation. Second, individuals make positive suggestions for action and these suggestions are likely to be accepted if they converge with the predispositions of a large part of the crowd. For example, if many people in the crowd are angry, aggressive individuals are more likely to have an influence. As a result of this process, the crowd arrives at a consensual understanding of what is right and wrong in the situation arrived at. The crowd now appears to behave with some logic and purpose, and to be capable of enforcing its new norm. Thus, via processes of *normative influence,* participants begin to experience pressure to conform to the implicit norm they perceive to be taking shape. By conforming to this new norm, crowd members influence those around them, who infer from their conformity that the norm is widely accepted.

However, this does not mean that the crowd is unanimous. Contrary to popular thinking about crowds, there is no 'group mind' in emergent norm theory. However, as the situation unfolds, individuals feel different, act differently and participate for different reasons. This is crucial to emergent norm theory and distinguishes it from earlier accounts of crowd behaviour. Some people are more committed to action than others, some are concerned but still uncertain about the correct course of action, others are curious spectators, and still others are simply present to capitalize on the situation, perhaps for the thrill of violence or destruction. However passive and disengaged are curious spectators, and mercenary are exploiters, their presence and failure to intervene are likely to be seen as a sign of approval by the active participants. In this way they contribute to the growing illusion of unanimity among the crowd.

A problem many critics have had with this theory is that too often it tends to *describe* rather than genuinely *explain* crowd behaviour. For example, the theory identifies certain people who take on roles within the crowd (e.g., observers and exploiters) but it does not specify what causes different people to adopt these roles. Turner and Killian (1987) argue that 'distinctive' individuals and behaviours are likely to shape the emergent norm, but do not propose specific or principled criteria for distinctiveness. More generally, critics have alleged that the theory is not specific about how crowds form and are organized. Where emergent norm theory does make clear predictions, empirical support is mixed. For example, according to the theory, rumour is central to the formation of crowds. However, field studies of crowd events, such as the Detroit riots of 1967, showed that more participants heard about it through the mass media than by rumour. Empirical studies of crowds have produced other problems for emergent norm theory. For example, the theory predicts that conformity to crowd behaviour should be strongest when crowd members are identifiable: participants perceive that the crowd will reward compliance and punish deviance. But most relevant research findings suggest that people are more susceptible to crowd influence when they are anonymous rather than identifiable, and lacking in, rather than high in, self-awareness. These findings are consistent with deindividuation accounts of crowd behaviour.

Other critiques have centred on the extent to which the long-standing norms of the group and the societies in which they are embedded are left behind when crowds form, requiring entirely new norms to emerge. That is, when crowds come together, norms come with them. What happens to these norms? Critics from various perspectives have asked whether there really is a radical discontinuity between the norms that govern our everyday lives and the norms that govern crowd situations. Research by Stephen Reicher and his colleagues (e.g., Reicher, 1987, 2001; Reicher et al., 1995) shows that the ongoing social identities and associated normative codes of crowd members, whether as environmental protestors, anarchists or police, have been shown to have a profound effect on their behaviour in crowd situations. According to the SIDE model, the creative potential of crowds lies in the ability of its participants to discover group norms that may not have been apparent to them before, and to transform and adapt group norms in light of the new situation. Finally, critics have pointed out that it is not clear in what sense the so-called 'collective behaviour' of crowds is different from the aggregated behaviour of the individuals who comprise the crowd. For example, while psychological states such as 'uncertainty' and 'urgency' can be ascribed to individual crowd members, it is not clear they can be ascribed to the collective, at least not without resurrecting the 'group mind' hypothesis.

Despite the many criticisms that have been levelled at emergent norm theory, even its critics acknowledge the many valuable insights it contributes to the study of crowds, and how it has helped shape the social psychological study of crowds to this day. It has also been very influential in the study of disasters and how groups of people behave in crisis situations (e.g., Dynes & Tierney, 1994). In summary, the point that crowds have an

energizing and creative potential, but nonetheless behave in rational, systematic and normative ways, has been highly influential. We may or may not have cause to fear the crowd, but it is clear that we should no longer regard crowds as lacking in all human reason or constraint.

Questions

1. Think of the different motivations that people might have to be part of a crowd. What behaviours might we witness from so-called 'exploiters', who are simply present to capitalize on the situation?
2. Reicher (1996) developed the elaborated social identity model of crowd behaviour, which focuses on the emergence and development of crowd conflict (see also Drury, Reicher & Stott, 2012). According to this perspective, crowd conflict is meaningful, but can bring about social and psychological change because this meaning may be contested. How can this be linked to the ideas of emergent norm theory? What are the key similarities and differences between emergent norm theory and the elaborated SIDE model?
3. The yellow vest movement (*gilet jaunes*) began in France in 2018. The movement was originally motivated by ecomonic pressures such as tax reforms that disadvantage the working and middle classes, rising fuel prices and increases in the cost of living. People in yellow vests gathered in large groups to demonstrate against the government, blocking roads, shopping areas and preventing access to some important landmarks. Whilst many of the protests were peaceful, some developed into violent riots. The movement also spread to other cities around the world in 2018–19, where groups of people protested similar issues. However, yellow vest protests have involved incidents of racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, both in France and abroad. Much of the activity of these groups was coordinated via social media. Take some time to read about the yellow vest movement and try to map the events and behaviours of the groups onto the various theories of deindividuation and crowd behaviour. How might such theories need to be developed further to accommodate the role of social media in mobilizing crowds?

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Road rage: losing it behind the wheel

In 1950, Disney released an animated short, *Motor Mania*. In it, Goofy 'plays' a decent, mild-mannered chap called Mr Walker, who considers himself to be a good driver. But when Mr Walker gets behind the wheel of his car, he morphs into 'Mr Wheeler', an abominable creature of limitless competitiveness, impatience and rage. The film is easy to find on the Internet, and apart from the cars and some male-centric language, it has not aged a day. The film captures a truth about motoring that is all too recognizable even now, over 60 years later: some people seem to undergo a kind of personality transformation when they drive. They appear to be more prone to antisocial behaviour, risk taking and anger, doing, saying and gesturing things that they would never normally contemplate. We have all seen it, and many of us have done it. In its most extreme form, it is known as 'road rage' (e.g., Ayar, 2006; Byrne, 2000).

The remarkable transformation that driving seems to cause in some people is interesting from a social psychological perspective, since it seems to illustrate *the power of the situation* to override personality and shape our behaviour. But what is it about the driving situation, specifically, that seems to give it such power? One key answer that has often been advanced is that road rage and other forms of antisocial driving stem from deindividuation (Ayar, 2006; Byrne, 2000; Dula, 2011; Ellison-Potter, Bell & Deffenbacher, 2001; Novaco, 1998). In a car, you are surrounded by others, but nonetheless you are largely anonymous and physically cut off from them in the metal and glass shell of your car. As we have seen, this meets the two key conditions for deindividuation effects, in which people feel less inhibited about aggression.

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However plausible it seems, direct evidence for the deindividuating explanation is scarce, and about the best

experimental demonstration comes from Ellison-Potter et al. (2001). They manipulated anonymity and showed that participants drove more aggressively in the 'anonymous' than in the 'identifiable' condition of their experiment. However, their drivers were in a simulator, not actually on a road (for obvious ethical and practical reasons). Also, anonymity was manipulated merely by asking participants to imagine that other drivers could, or could not, identify them. Thus, there is much doubt about whether the results really show that anonymity makes people drive more aggressively, or merely whether they think it does, and acted out their own expectations in the experiment.

A fascinating study by Parkinson (2001) uncovered some important factors apart from deindividuation. Parkinson asked British participants questions about the last time they had been angry while driving and while not driving, and compared the answers. As might be expected, people reported more intense experiences of anger, associated with stronger levels of other-blame, when they were driving. This seems to be due to some social psychological aspects of driving. Participants indicated that while driving (vs. not driving), complete strangers were much more likely to be the targets of their anger. Given that driving interactions are relatively simple and we have not met most of our fellow drivers before, there is little room for complicated emotions, or to find some kind of historical fault with one's own behaviour. Another key factor was uncovered in Parkinson's study: in driving situations, participants reported being less able to communicate their anger to others and to see their anger being acknowledged. You can gesture, wave and swear as much as you like, but the other driver may not notice or may speed into the distance before you have seen their reaction. This failure of communication tends to frustrate and anger people even more.

Furthermore, although situational factors are important, we should not overestimate the extent to which our behaviour behind the wheel is completely divorced from our day-to-day behaviour. People who are angry, aggressive or stressed when not driving are more likely to be prone to aggression behind the wheel (Gulian, Matthews, Glendon, Davies & Debney, 1989; Lowenstein, 1997; Stephens & Ohtsuka, 2014). Impulsive people and sensation-seekers are more likely to be aggressive drivers (Stephens & Sullman, 2015). People who try to present an intimidating image of themselves to the world in their everyday lives are also more likely to experience road rage (Bassett, Cate & Dabbs, 2002). Deindividuation may be a factor in road rage, but it does not tell the whole story.

Questions

1. Thinking about the methods of manipulating deindividuation you have been reading about, what else do you think researchers may be manipulating? Specifically, how do the researchers interfere with communication between people? Does this represent a confound, and what does it mean for the evidence cited in favour of the concept of deindividuation?
2. What do you think the SIDE model would have to say about the idea that road rage emerges because of the deindividuating aspects of the driving situation? According to this model, when might driver aggression increase, and when might it decrease, in response to the anonymous conditions of driving?
3. According to Halpern (1998), a good critical thinking skill is to think of two improvements that could be made to an experiment (see Chapter 15). Based on the description of the study by Ellison-Potter et al. (2001), what improvements do you think you could make? (Note: if you would like further information, look up this article in the References section of this book, and see if your institution's library holds the journal in which it was published.)

GROUP DECISION MAKING

Now, we turn our discussion to how people in groups make decisions and solve problems. Thus far, we have discussed many ways in which group behaviour can differ from the behaviour of solitary individuals. Research on how groups arrive at decisions and deal with problems is no exception. Of particular importance here are the following questions. Does interaction with people in groups intensify our decisions? Do groups generally make 'good' or 'bad' decisions? How does real group decision making compare with folk wisdom suggesting that groups are more conservative than individuals in decision making and that they err towards caution? How do groups solve problems differently than individuals acting alone?

Group polarization

When people discuss important issues, they often do so with people who already think the same way. We generally speak more often with people who share the same opinions and attitudes and go to meetings with like-minded others and so on. Does this kind of interaction make our attitudes stronger? Findings suggest that the answer is yes and that groups may not be more conservative in their decisions at all. Stoner (1961) tested this folk wisdom by presenting participants with scenarios (e.g., a person planning to write a book) and asking them to advise the person in the scenario how much risk they should take (e.g., based on the probability of the book's success). For example, participants might be asked to rate the *lowest* probability of success that the book should have before considering it acceptable to recommend that the author should write it (the lower the probability, the riskier the advice). After responding to a series of items privately, people would get together in groups and reach agreement on each item. Rather than providing more moderate decisions in groups, findings showed that the group decisions became riskier. This was dubbed the **risky shift** phenomenon and was replicated in a variety of different settings (see also Wallach, Kogan & Bem, 1962).

Risky shift The finding that groups seem to make riskier decisions than individuals.

However, this shift is not universal and is not necessarily best characterized as 'risky'. Subsequent research has demonstrated that groups sometimes make less risky decisions than the individuals on average. Overall, it depends on the initial leanings of the group. As Moscovici and Zavalloni (1969) stated, discussion typically strengthens the average inclination of group members. This phenomenon is called **group polarization** (see Figure 10.11). Moscovici and Zavalloni found that group discussion enhanced French students' (already) positive attitudes towards their president and enhanced their (already) negative attitudes towards Americans.

Group polarization Group interaction strengthens the initial leanings of group members so that attitudes (and decisions) become polarized.

This finding has been replicated in a number of different settings. For example, Brauer, Judd and Jacquelin (2001) found that when students shared their mutual dislike for other people, their negative attitudes of these people were even stronger. After discussing a traffic case, Isozaki (1984) found that students gave stronger judgements of 'guilty' than beforehand. Further, Myers and Bishop (1970) organized groups of students who were high and low in prejudice and asked them to respond to various indicators of racial attitudes before and after discussing their attitudes with their group. Again, the discussions enhanced the initial leanings of the group; that is, the high prejudiced groups became more prejudiced and the low prejudiced groups became less prejudiced. Group polarization effects have been demonstrated more recently in settings such as in computer-mediated communication (Sia, Tan & Wei, 2002; Spears, Lea & Lee, 1990), efforts to reduce conflict (e.g., Paluck, 2010), choice dilemmas (e.g., Krizan & Baron, 2007), political communication (Iyengar & Westwood, 2014) and even on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter (e.g., Yardi & Boyd, 2010). On social networking sites, group polarization can occur to such an extent that 'echo chambers' form and people then only communicate with people who share their attitudes. This has the consequence of even further strengthening, and therefore polarizing, people's attitudes (Del Vicario et al., 2016).

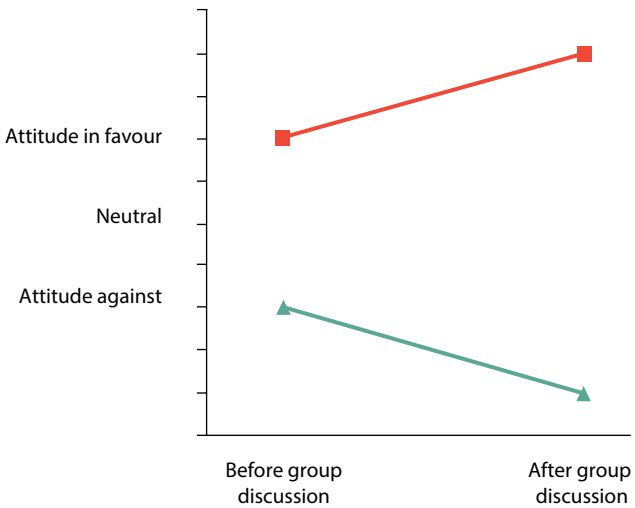

FIGURE 10.11 The group polarization hypothesis Group interaction enhances the initial attitudes of group members.

Source: Moscovici and Zavalloni (1969). Copyright © 1969 by American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

Group polarization is a robust phenomenon in experiments – run an experiment and there is a good chance you will observe the effect. But what does it mean for everyday life? As mentioned earlier, we are most likely to associate with people who share similar attitudes to us. The research on group polarization suggests that our attitudes are likely to become even stronger after interacting with these like-minded people. Indeed, research in real-life situations suggests this does occur. What is commonly known as 'terrorism' is a good example. As people come together to share their grievances in a given social situation, they often interact in isolation from potentially moderating people and groups. Unsurprisingly, they become more extreme over time and individuals can perform violent acts that would not have occurred in the absence of the group (McCauley & Segal, 1987). Indeed, the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001 were arguably the result of a long process of interaction between like-minded people and the strong polarizing effect of group interaction.

ISTOCK

Another good example is how children develop gender roles. When they are young, children typically play in larger, mixed-gender groups but as they grow older, they self-segregate into all-female and all-male groups. Eleanor Maccoby (2002) argued that this has the polarizing effect of accentuating gender-typical behaviour and gender roles. As girls interact more with other girls, they become more 'girly' and relationship oriented. As boys interact more with other boys, they become more 'boyish' and competitive. This polarization is a robust consequence of group interaction, which can have both positive and negative consequences. But why exactly does it happen? Why do groups typically adopt decisions and attitudes that are significant exaggerations of the average opinions of their members? There are two main reasons: normative influence and informational influence (see also Chapter 9).

TIME TO REFLECT

Can you think of other examples of group polarization? What might be some of the consequences of group polarization?

First, group polarization may occur because when we interact with others, we naturally compare ourselves with them. You will remember from Chapter 8 that Festinger (1954) argued in his theory of *social comparison* that people are motivated to evaluate their opinions and abilities. Thus, one way to evaluate one's own attitudes is to compare them with others' attitudes. If we find that others share our views, we may express stronger attitudes because we want the like-minded people to like us. In general, we are most persuaded by people who are like us – our 'reference groups' and people with whom we identify (Abrams, Wetherell, Cochrane, Hogg & Turner, 1990) – so it stands to reason that if we find out that people are indeed like us, we will want to be viewed favourably by them. On the other hand, group discussion might reveal that our attitudes are not shared by the group, in which case, we may endeavour to avoid the disapproval of the group. This is an example of *normative influence* – the tendency to conform to the perceived norms of the group.

Pluralistic ignorance A situation where a majority of group members privately reject a norm, but assume (incorrectly) that most others accept it.

Group discussion is therefore good for dispelling what is known as **pluralistic ignorance**. This is when we often do not really know what people are thinking because they keep their attitudes to themselves (Miller & McFarland, 1987; Prentice & Miller, 1993). People may be wary of introducing their attitudes for fear they will be rejected. So, we may think our own attitudes stand out. However, group discussion makes others' attitudes clear, paving the way for people to express their true attitudes if these are indeed shared by the group. On the other hand, if people find that their attitudes are not shared by the group, they can conceal their attitudes, or even adopt the desirable attitude by jumping on the bandwagon (the *bandwagon effect;* see Codol, 1975). Because they want to be seen in a positive light by the group, they may compete to express the most extreme opinion at the desirable end of the pole, even if this is not their attitude at all. Some research suggests that pluralistic ignorance can be a barrier to the discussion of important topics such as climate change (Geiger & Swim, 2016), and from seeking help from mental health services (Karaffa & Koch, 2015). A misperception of others' attitudes can lead people into silence.

However, people may also be genuinely swayed by the opinions of the group and find them persuasive. Thus, group polarization can also be a result of *informational influence,* in which when the correct attitude or behaviour is unclear, people look to others for guidance. It is argued here that through group discussion, people's ideas are pooled. Most of the ideas may support the dominant opinion and occasionally group members will introduce new arguments that members of the group had not previously considered. The pooling of familiar ideas and new persuasive arguments may sway group members' opinions further and cause their opinions to become more extreme (Burnstein & Vinokur, 1977; Vinokur & Burnstein, 1974). As a result, the group as a whole becomes polarized. To give an example, someone who is against abortion is likely to become even less in favour of abortion after a discussion with like-minded individuals who introduce new arguments against abortion. It is important to note here that active participation in the group is important. Verbalizing one's opinions to the group has the effect of reinforcing attitudes. So, the more group members discuss and repeat their shared ideas, the more they are validated (Brauer, Judd & Gliner, 1995). But even simply anticipating a discussion with a person holding an opposing view can motivate people to prepare their arguments and express them more strongly (Fitzpatrick & Eagly, 1981).

Self-categorization theorists (see also Chapter 8) have proposed a third account that treats polarization as a process of social conformity (Turner & Oakes, 1989). Specifically, it is argued that people in groups form a representation of the group norm from the opinions expressed by others in the group compared to those opinions assumed (or known) to be held by outgroups. The process that is responsible for identification with a group (known as *self-categorization*) produces conformity to the group norm. If the group norm is polarized, then group polarization will occur. If the norm is not polarized, people will adopt the mean group position. The important feature of this argument is that for polarization to occur, the initial group leanings need to be perceived as a norm (Abrams et al., 1990; Mackie & Cooper, 1984; McGarty, Turner, Hogg, David & Wetherell, 1992; Spears & Postmes, 2015; Turner, Wetherell & Hogg, 1989; see also Spears, Lea, Postmes & Wolbert, 2011).

Groupthink

We now know that groups do not necessarily err towards caution. They often express their opinions more extremely than their individual members would do alone. But what is the impact of groups on the quality of the decisions they make? Janis (1971, 1982) questioned why groups have sometimes been known to make disastrous decisions. In particular, he wanted to explain how group decision-making processes explain some significant international disasters, such as the US failure to anticipate the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the botched invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. According to Janis, these events shared some important features. In particular, Janis believed that in each case, the decision-making groups suppressed dissent in order to maintain group harmony. Unfortunately, a dissenting opinion would have gone a long way. Janis believed that these events were also characterized by three main features:

1. a cohesive group where people come from similar backgrounds
2. the group is isolated from outside opinions
3. there are no clear rules that guide decision making.

Janis (1971) argued that these features of groups lead to bad decisions and he defined **groupthink** as: 'The mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence-seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive in-group that it tends to override realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action' (p. 43).

Groupthink The mode of thinking that groups engage in when cohesion seems more important than making the right decision and considering alternatives.

TABLE 10.2 Symptoms of groupthink

Illusion of invulnerability	Excessive optimism that encourages the group to take risks and not consider the dangers
Belief in morality of the group	The group assumes its inherent rightness and ignores challenges or concerns about the consequences of its decisions
Collective rationalization	The group explains and justifies its assumptions and decisions as a way of discounting challenges
Stereotyped view of the outgroup	The group has a negative view of the other group, or enemy, which makes conflict resolution difficult
Pressure for dissenters to conform	Group members who raise doubts about the group's decision are put under pressure to conform
Self-censorship	Group members withhold opinions that deviate from the group's consensus
Illusion of unanimity	The consensus opinion within the group is assumed to be unanimous
Self-appointed 'mindguards'	Group members who protect the group's decision and the group's leader from opposition

According to Janis, there are several 'symptoms' of groupthink, which help group members maintain faith in their decision under difficult circumstances (see Table 10.2). As a result of these features, Janis argued that people do not seek or discuss alternative possibilities to their planned decision, they do not assess the risks involved in the group decision, and they do not make contingency plans in case the group fails. The outcomes, as we have seen, can be fatal. Janis (1982) recommended that groups should take several factors into account in order to prevent groupthink. He based these on examples of unsuccessful decision-making processes, including the Kennedy administration's handling of the USSR's deployment of medium-range ballistic missiles in Cuba in 1962. These are:

1. Groups, and especially leaders of groups, need to be impartial and not endorse any one position from the outset.

2 Groups should assign someone the role of critical evaluator or 'devil's advocate', who will critically evaluate the group's decisions, question assumptions and plans, and encourage the group to consider alternative options.

3 Everyone within the group should be encouraged to critically think about the decisions being made.

4 It is useful to divide groups, encourage members to seek advice from trusted outsiders, and then reunite them to discuss any differences.

5 Groups should regularly invite critiques from outside experts who will challenge the group's decisions.

6 Before implementing the final decision, groups should spend time discussing lingering issues or doubts and considering the dangers and consequences of their decisions.

Although Janis's theory has received much attention, not all researchers have been convinced by his analysis. The main problem seems to be that much of the evidence for groupthink has been retrospective. Some findings support the theory (e.g., Hart, 1990; McCauley, 1989; Tetlock, 1979), but others are inconsistent with the basic principles of groupthink, and even producing a groupthink effect in controlled experiments has proved difficult (Turner & Pratkanis, 2014). In particular, group cohesiveness does not always lead to groupthink. The norms of a cohesive group can actually produce favourable decisions so long as the norms favour critical evaluation (Postmes, Spears & Cihangir, 2001). Furthermore, after an examination of many different events, Tetlock, Petersen, McGuire, Chang and Feld (1992) concluded that even good decision-making processes can lead to bad decisions. Experimental work has not always supported groupthink, in particular with respect to cohesiveness, where sometimes there is an association between cohesiveness and groupthink and sometimes there is not, and this is largely dependent on the conditions of the experiment (e.g., Bernthal & Insko, 1993; Flowers, 1977; Rovio, Eskola, Kozub, Duda & Lintunen, 2009; Turner, Pratkanis, Probasco & Leve, 1992). Other researchers have argued that cohesiveness itself should be more clearly defined before we can fully understand how it influences good decision making. Its influence may be quite different if we think of cohesiveness in terms of liking, friendship or interpersonal attraction; indeed, findings suggest this is the case (Hogg & Hains, 1998; McCauley, 1989; see also McCauley, 1998). Nevertheless, the concept of groupthink has influenced how social psychologists understand the processes underlying good and bad decisions. Clearly, two heads are not always better than one.

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Studying groupthink

As we have discussed, one important criticism of groupthink is that the evidence for the phenomenon has been retrospective case studies of group decision making. For example, scholars have looked to events like the space shuttle *Challenger* disaster and Pearl Harbor to link bad group decisions with faulty group processes in each example. However, this approach is not without problems. For instance, it is relatively easy in hindsight to find specific examples that support a theory. Applying a theory to specific examples may also mean that the researcher misses other potentially important factors. Furthermore, the researcher has no control over the variables of interest. For example, if a researcher wants to investigate the role of cohesion in promoting groupthink, historical examples can only tell us if cohesion (in a general sense) may have had an influence on the decision. It can tell us very little about how different degrees of cohesion may influence group decisions.

One way to answer this criticism and test the effects of variables related to groupthink is to take investigations

into the laboratory and conduct experiments. There have been some attempts to do this, although results have been mixed and sometimes contradictory. For example, Flowers (1977) manipulated group cohesion (high and low) and presented participants with a crisis problem to solve. In addition to this manipulation, the groups operated with leaders who either adopted an open or closed leadership style. Flowers found that the open leadership style produced the most suggested solutions and promoted more complete use of the information than the closed leadership style. In this study, levels of cohesion had no effect, which is contrary to the theory of groupthink. However, Turner et al. (1992) manipulated group cohesion slightly differently and found that in addition to self-esteem threat, cohesion had an independent effect on decision making, such that decisions resulting from highly cohesive groups were poorer than those resulting from less cohesive groups. This provides some support for the theory. In another study, Callaway and Esser (1984) found that intermediate cohesiveness (not low as the theory may suggest) produces the best decisions. Thus, the results from studies that have explicitly investigated groupthink – especially the effects of group cohesion on group decision making – have been mixed. This presents challenges for the theory. As you will know from your social psychology studies so far, theories face difficulties if they are not supported by empirical findings.

What might the problem be? One issue may be the way the experiments have been conducted. For example, Park (1990) criticized efforts to empirically test the principles of groupthink because they tend to include only one variable (or a small number) at a time. It is therefore difficult to know how various factors such as leadership and cohesion work in combination with each other to produce groupthink phenomena. In statistical terminology, there may be interactions between variables that are missed in studies that only investigate single variables. Further, as Rose (2011) noted, despite 40 years of groupthink theory, experimental studies are extremely limited, with only a small number of all the model's variables being adequately tested. As a result, many scholars now see groupthink as a myth, while others remain committed to the theory. Of course, another consideration is that the theory may be incomplete and may need to be revised. In general, research on groupthink has not yielded a consistent picture that either supports or undermines the theory.

Questions

1. One interesting thing to note about groupthink is that despite contradictory findings and difficulties in carrying out conclusive experimental studies testing the theory, it still enjoys a great deal of attention. For example, management training programmes often focus on the prevention of groupthink. Groupthink has been applied to many different domains where decisions are made, such as juries and sporting teams. Why do you think the theory is so influential?
2. Would it be possible to test the full model of groupthink? Take a look at the literature to see if this has been done. What are the difficulties in testing such a large social psychological model?
3. Can you think of a study to test one of Janis's recommendations for reducing groupthink?

EXPLORING FURTHER

In the 1957 film *Twelve Angry Men,* directed by Sidney Lumet and starring Henry Fonda, the jury members begin their deliberations in a capital murder case where an 18-year-old man is accused of killing his father. The film follows the decision-making processes of the jury, riddled with errors, misconceptions and prejudices akin to the phenomenon of groupthink. One juror attempts to convince the jury of the defendant's innocence. If you get a chance, take a look at the film and think about Janis's groupthink principles. How did the group overcome its problems? Also think about our discussion of minority influence in Chapter 9.

Group problem solving

We now consider how individuals versus groups solve problems. The predominant conclusion from research is that two (or more) heads *are,* more often than not, better than one. On various intellectual tasks, people perform better in groups than they do alone. For example, Laughlin and Adamopoulos (1980) presented participants with analogy problems and found that participants' answers were more accurate after discussion than when answering alone. Also, it is clear that when groups rely on expertise within the group when solving problems, the group performs better (Brodbeck & Greitemeyer, 2000; Davis & Harless, 1996). In eyewitness testimony, group accounts are much more accurate than individual reports (Warnick & Sanders, 1980). Furthermore, when groups get together and critique each other's ideas, they have been found to come up with better quality ideas (McGlynn, Tubbs & Holzhausen, 1995; McGlynn, McGurk, Effland, Johll & Harding, 2004). This may explain why **brainstorming** can sometimes be an effective technique in group problem solving, at least if groups follow certain principles identified by Brown and Paulus (2002):

Brainstorming Process of a group getting together and discussing a problem openly, allowing (many) ideas to flow freely.

- combine group brainstorming with individual brainstorming (Korde & Paulus 2017)
- have group members interact with one another in writing (see also Mullen, Johnson & Salas, 1991; Paulus, Korde, Dickson, Carmeli & Cohen-Meitar, 2015)
- make use of electronic communication technology (see also Gallupe, Cooper, Grise & Bastianutti, 1994; Gallupe et al., 1992; Michinov, Jamet, Métayr & Le Hénaff, 2015).

It has also been suggested that brainstorming groups are more effective if they are small rather than large, and if the experimenter is not present to monitor the process (Mullen et al., 1991). If ideas are allowed to flow in an efficient manner, working in groups to solve problems can be effective. On the other hand, there is evidence to suggest that if only simple group brainstorming is used, with no breakout input from individuals, solitary efforts are typically better than those of the group (Diehl & Stroebe, 1987; Paulus, Larey & Ortega, 1995). People may feel good about taking part and feel that they have worked productively even if they may not have done so (Stroebe & Diehl, 1994).

LEADERSHIP

One question we have not addressed so far is the role of the leader in group decision making. Do leaders need a particular combination of personality traits to be effective? What about the situation? To what extent is group identity important in leadership? In this section, we consider different theoretical perspectives on what maks a good leader. We also consider the roles of culture and gender in leadership.

What makes a good leader?

The **great person theory** of leadership asserts that good leaders have an ideal combination of personality traits that enable them to lead effectively, regardless of the situation. Originating in the 19th century and linked to the work of historian Thomas Carlyle, it is argued that a leader is someone who is gifted with unique qualities that capture people's imaginations. Some people are born with the necessary characteristics to set them apart from others and it is these characteristics that determine their place in positions of power and authority. However, the great person theory is not well supported by research. Studies have generally found only weak correlations between personality traits and leadership ability. Some patterns have emerged; for example, leaders tend to be more intelligent, emotionally intelligent, extraverted, conscientious, socially skilled, confident, driven by a desire for power, more charismatic and less neurotic than non-leaders (Albright & Forziati, 1995; Colbert, Barrick & Bradley, 2014; Hogan, Curphy & Hogan, 1994; Judge, Bono, Ilies & Gerhardt, 2002; Siegling, Nielsen & Petrides, 2014). There is also some research suggesting that leadership may be heritable; for example, twins tend to display similar leadership behaviour (Arvey, Rotundo, Johnson, Zhang & McGue, 2006; Arvey, Zhang, Avolio & Krueger, 2007). However,

Great person theory Theory of leadership asserting that leaders have an ideal combination of personality traits that enables them to be effective.

in general, relationships appear fairly modest so it seems unlikely that people are 'born leaders'. Indeed, some aspects of leadership may be evolved, such as mechanisms designed to dominate and exploit others (van Vugt & Ronay, 2014), but it is widely accepted that many other factors contribute to leadership success (for reviews, see Judge et al., 2002; Lord, DeVader & Alliger, 1986).

Theorists have examined the possibility that particular combinations of personality traits may be right for certain *contexts*. Several theories of leadership have examined the characteristics of leaders, followers and the characteristics of situations (Hollander, 1961; Sternberg & Vroom, 2002). One such theory is the **contingency theory of leadership**. This theory argues that leadership success is dependent on how *task related* or *relationship oriented* the leader is, and the amount of influence they have over the group (Fiedler, 1967, 1978). Thus, two types of leader are assumed to exist. It is argued that task-oriented leaders focus more on the task at hand and getting the job done, and less on followers' feelings and relationships. On the other hand, relationship-oriented leaders focus more on followers' feelings and relationships and less on getting the task completed.

Contingency theory of leadership Theory arguing that leadership success is dependent on how task related or relationship oriented the leader is, and the amount of influence they have over the group.

Central to this theory is that neither leader type is best across the board. Instead, the type of leader that is optimal depends on the context and, more specifically, the amount of influence the leader has over their group. In *high control* contexts, the leader has strong interpersonal relationships with the group, a strong position in the organization or group, and the work to be done is well structured and clear. In *low control* contexts, the leader has poorer relationships with the group and the tasks are less clearly defined. Fiedler argued that task-oriented leaders are likely to be more effective in high control contexts (where everything is running smoothly, everyone is happy and the leader can focus on the task) or low control contexts (where the leader takes charge and imposes order). Indeed, research has shown that specific, challenging goals and the monitoring of achievement by progress goals helps improve work outcomes (Locke & Latham, 1990, 2009; Latham, Stajkovic & Locke, 2010). On the other hand, relationship-oriented leaders are likely to be most effective in conditions of moderate control. In such a context, things are generally running smoothly but the relationship-oriented leader can step in when necessary to resolve relationship difficulties that may reduce overall group effectiveness. Research reveals that this kind of leadership is good for morale, increases group cohesion and people feel more satisfied with their situation (Spector, 1986; Tabernero, Chambel, Curral & Arana, 2009). In a democratic environment, people also become more motivated to achieve (Burger, 1987) and rate the outcomes more positively (van den Bos & Spruijt, 2002).

Leadership effectiveness can also be viewed as a process of minority influence (see Chapter 9). For example, some research has demonstrated that leaders, like minorities, can inspire and influence people because they are consistent in their views and goals and exhibit self-confidence (Bennis, 1984; House & Singh, 1987). They gain the trust of their group by communicating their clear and consistent view to others.

Taking a different approach still, social identity theorists argue that effective leadership depends on the leader's ability to create a common identity with followers. That is, instead of promoting a sense of 'me' and 'you', effective leaders are able to create a sense of 'us'. This sense of 'us' and a collective purpose is good for the group: it affirms and advances the group's position compared to important outgroups (Haslam & Platow, 2001; Haslam & Reicher, 2016; Reicher, Haslam & Hopkins, 2005; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Since many situations in which leaders emerge are competitive or conflictual, this approach argues that followers will be most inspired by leaders who are able to advance the group in favour of other groups, or to make the group feel superior to other groups. Research supports this view, demonstrating that people prefer leaders who are biased towards the ingroup in terms of resource allocation, even when they see this as unfair (Platow, Hoar, Reid, Harley & Morrison, 1997). People also deal less harshly with ingroup leaders who behave badly compared to outgroup leaders, if they view the ingroup leader as acting in the group's interests (Abrams, Randsley de Moura & Travaglino, 2013). Research shows that potential leaders can be trained to manage group identities in the workplace to work towards effective group processes (Haslam, Steffens, Peters, Boyce, Mallett & Fransen, 2017).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Draw up a short list of leaders you either know personally, or prominent world leaders. Using the principles you have read about so far, what type of leader are they? How is their leadership influenced by the context?

Culture and leadership

Increasing globalization has created a need to understand the role of culture in leader behaviour and performance. According to House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman and Gupta (2004), there are some aspects of desirable leaders that appear to be universal. For example, the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) project identified a list of leadership attributes endorsed by 17,000 people across 62 countries, and isolated 22 universal positive attributes (see Table 10.3). The project also identified eight attributes universally regarded as negative, such as being egocentric, dictatorial and ruthless (see also de Luque, Lelchook & Quigley, 2015).

However, there are also some key differences in leadership behaviour across cultures. For example, the GLOBE project revealed that while countries in Latin America, the Middle East and Southern Asia scored high on ingroup collectivist leader behaviour such as promoting loyalty and joint interests, Western countries scored much lower. Also, while Western countries scored higher on uncertainty avoidance and future orientation, other regions scored lower. Thus there are clear cross-cultural differences in leadership orientation.

TABLE 10.3 Universal leadership attributes

Trustworthy	Arouses motives	Skilled administrator
Just	Motivator	Coordinator
Honest	Dependable	Team builder
Foresight	Intelligent	Excellence oriented
Forward plans	Decisive	Informed
Encouraging	Effective bargainer	Dynamic
Positive	Win-win problem solver	Communicative
	Builds confidence	

Source: Adapted from House et al. (2004) and reproduced by permission of SAGE Publications

Increasing globalization has also made it necessary to know more about how leaders can best function in cross-cultural working environments. Adler and Bartholomew (1992) argued that leaders need to develop five attributes in order to work effectively as global leaders:

1. an understanding of business, political and cultural environments in relevant domains
2. an understanding of the perspectives, trends and technologies of other cultures
3. an ability to work with people of different cultures
4. an ability to adapt to other cultures
5. an ability to relate to other cultures as equals.

An appreciation of cultural differences, and the ability to adapt to these differences, strongly influences leader behaviour in cross-cultural contexts.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Below is an excerpt from the dimensions of culture scale (House et al., 2004) which was used to identify cultural differences in leader behaviour across cultures. It was adapted from Hofstede's culture in the workplace questionnaire and identifies the different aspects of leader behaviour. Take a look at the scale and complete it yourself. If you have time, perhaps ask friends from other countries to complete the scale and compare your results. Do you notice any trends?

Uncertainty avoidance

In this society, orderliness and consistency are stressed, even at the expense of experimentation and innovation.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

In this society, societal requirements and instructions are spelled out in detail so citizens know what they are expected to do.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

Power distance

In this society, followers are expected to:

question their leaders 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 obey their leaders when in disagreement without question

In this society, power is:

Shared throughout the society 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 concentrated at the top

Institutional collectivism

In this society, leaders encourage group loyalty even if individual goals suffer.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

The economic system in this society is designed to maximize:

individual interests 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 collective interests

Ingroup collectivism

In this society, children take pride in the individual accomplishments of their parents.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

In this society, parents take pride in the individual accomplishments of their children.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

Gender egalitarianism

In this society, boys are encouraged more than girls to attain a higher education.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

In this society, who is more likely to serve in a position of high office?

men 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 women

Assertiveness

In this society, people are generally:

non-assertive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 assertive

In this society, people are generally:

Tender 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Tough

Future orientation

In this society the accepted norm is to:

Accept the status quo 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 plan for the future

In this society, people place more emphasis on:

Solving current problems 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 planning for the future

Performance orientation

In this society, students are encouraged to strive for continuously improved performance.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

In this society, people are rewarded for excellent performance.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

Humane orientation

In this society, people are generally:

not at all concerned about others 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very concerned about others

In this society, people are generally:

not at all sensitive to others 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very sensitive towards others

Source: House et al. (2004). Reproduced by permission of SAGE Publications

Gender and leadership

How do female and male leaders compare to one another? How does the gender of a leader influence group processes? It is commonly believed that women need to work much harder than men from the beginning to achieve the same level of status. Also, everyday experience would suggest that female leaders are evaluated differently than male leaders who do exactly the same job. For example, a confident kind of leader may be perceived as bossy

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or 'mannish' if she is woman. Research supports this common wisdom (Biernat, Crandall, Young, Kobrynowicz & Halpin, 1998). For example, Eagly, Makhijani and Klonsky (1992) found that if a female leader adopts a typically male leadership style, she is evaluated more negatively than a male leader behaving in the same manner. Furthermore, this is especially the case if the people making the evaluations are male. In another study, Butler and Geis (1990) showed that group members react differently to assertive leaders depending on whether the leaders are female or male. Participants in this study (especially men) reacted more negatively to the assertive female leader.

Does this mean that female leaders will be more effective if they adopt a typically 'female' style? Are women who are more *communal* (helpful, kind and concerned about others) more successful in gaining the respect of their group and promoting positive group processes, while men who are *agentic* (assertive and self-confident) make better leaders? Research suggests that women find themselves in a catch-22 situation. If they behave in a communal way, they are perceived as having low leadership potential because good leaders are supposed to be agentic. On the other hand, if they behave counter-stereotypically and lead in an agentic manner, they are evaluated negatively (Carli, 2017; Carli & Eagly, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Karau & Makhijani, 1995). In this case, their behaviour goes against how women are 'supposed' to behave. These factors pose significant problems for female leaders and compromise their effectiveness. It is not surprising that in 2018 women made up only 4.5 per cent of CEOs or executive board chairs in European companies (European Women on Boards, 2018). The picture for women leaders becomes even more bleak when we consider that they are consistently paid less than men for doing the same work (Kulich, Ryan & Haslam, 2007) – a difference that is often deemed acceptable (Connor & Fiske, 2018). They are also more likely to be appointed to risky or 'doomed to failure' leadership positions than men (known as the **glass cliff effect**; Ryan & Haslam, 2005; see Ryan et al., 2016 for a review). Perhaps more optimistically, some evidence suggests that people have become more tolerant of women who violate stereotypically female behaviour norms (Twenge, 1997), and it is generally accepted that leaders must display both communal and agentic behaviours in order to get the most from their group (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Glass cliff effect
The tendency for women (compared to men) to be appointed to risky leadership positions.

TIME TO REFLECT

Think about gender and leadership in the context of gender roles as we discussed in Chapter 8. How much do you think people's ideas about women leaders have changed? Have things changed enough? What other challenges still face aspiring female leaders?

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Take a look at the Student Project on page 645 by Alexandra Björnstjerna Hjelm from Linköping University. Alexandra conducted a qualitative study of interprofessional healthcare education groups, which is relevant to the work discussed in this chapter concerning processes occurring within groups. It is also relevant to the study of communication (Chapter 5), social groups (Chapter 8), and improving intergroup relations (Chapter 12).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have learned that being a member of a group significantly influences what we do. Groups allow people to do things together that they would not be able to do alone. Sometimes group behaviour is good and sometimes it is not. In this chapter, you have learned that:

- The phenomenon of social facilitation suggests that working alongside others can energize people to work faster, better and to reach their individual potential.
- The arousal experienced in the presence of others enhances whichever response tendency is dominant, so whether social facilitation (or its opposite – social inhibition) occurs depends on the nature of the task. This is primarily due to the process of evaluation apprehension – people become concerned about the evaluation of others and their performance on 'easy' tasks is facilitated, whereas their performance on 'difficult' tasks is inhibited. People can also be distracted by the evaluation of others.
- Research on social loafing suggests that people will often 'slack off' when working in a group, in particular when their own contribution is not being monitored. This occurs when evaluation apprehension is low – typically when people are not accountable for their input. Social loafing can be reduced by making tasks challenging, appealing or involving.
- It is sometimes possible to see the dark side of humanity when people are deindividuated in crowds or bear no accountability for their actions. People can perform acts they would not normally do, such as looting, rioting and other forms of antisocial behaviour. Large groups tend to display more deindividuated behaviour than smaller groups. It is argued that being deindividuated draws attention away from the self, such that people become less self-aware and less aware of how they would normally behave.
- More recent theories of deindividuation argue that it is not a case of loss of identity or self-awareness, but increasing awareness of social identity or group norms. Deindividuated behaviour is not therefore always antisocial.
- Groups can facilitate decision making and problem solving such that – more often than not – people solve problems more accurately when they work with others than when they work alone. Research on group polarization suggests that group decisions enhance initial leanings of the group, through processes of normative and informational influence.
- However, not all groups make good decisions. When we examine the group decision-making processes that preceded some major world catastrophes, we can see symptoms of 'groupthink', which arguably led to disastrous outcomes.
- Working under an effective leader can drive a group to success and accomplishment in many ways. There are several theories to describe effective leadership behaviour and an emerging body of literature describing the challenges facing female leaders.

Groups are complex and dynamic. Nevertheless, people need groups and cannot live without them. Groups allow people to achieve together what they cannot do alone. Understanding group behaviour is therefore a topic of great importance to social psychologists. Our concern in this chapter has been on how people behave in groups. In Chapter 11, we turn to the study of how people in different groups behave towards one another. In the study of intergroup relations, social psychologists attempt to understand how groups react to, and influence, one another in positive and negative ways.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. What is social facilitation? Draw on evidence from social psychology to explain when social facilitation is likely (versus unlikely) to occur.
2. Drawing on theory and research, provide an overview of the antecedents and consequences of social loafing.
3. Is deindividuation a result of a 'loss of self'? Explain with reference to various theories of deindividuation, and associated research.

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Women in leadership: the glass cliff

According to Ryan and Haslam's (2007) glass cliff effect, women are assigned to precarious leadership roles, such as when an organization is likely to experience hardship or failure in the near future. In the run-up to the 2008 US presidential election, it was clear that the presidency would be a precarious position. America was beset by the gathering clouds of two frustrating and seemingly intractable wars, the spectre of domestic and international terrorism, declining international prestige, the threat of climate change and the economic and political difficulties of mitigating this threat, and rapidly bursting 'bubbles' in the housing and financial sectors. However, American Democrats opted for Barack Obama, the leading male candidate, rather than Senator Hillary Clinton, the leading woman, to run in the election.

1. How would you reconcile this electoral outcome with the glass cliff effect?
2. If men and women were equally likely to win election to the presidency of the USA, approximately how many presidents ought to have been female? Is the running total of female presidents, which is none, significantly less than would be expected by chance?
3. Hillary Clinton lost the 2016 presidential election to Donald Trump. How would you reconcile this electoral outcome with the glass cliff effect? How does your answer to this question compare with your response to question 1?
4. Can you think of other examples of the glass cliff effect in recent times?

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources, including videos and self-test multiple choice questions, to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

Haslam, S.A., Reicher, S.D. & Platow, M.J. (2010). *The new psychology of leadership: Identity, influence and power*. London: Psychology Press. Accessible and engaging coverage of the social identity approach to leadership in groups.

Janis, I.L. (1982). *Groupthink: Psychological studies of policy decisions and fiascoes* (2nd ed). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. Rather than reading a second-hand review, read Janis's original formulation of the theory of groupthink.

Parks, C.D. (Ed.). (2013). *Group processes*. Sage Library in Social Psychology. London: Sage. A four-volume resource of chapters on group processes written by experts in the field.

Reicher, S., Spears, R. & Postmes, T. (1995). A social identity model of deindividuation phenomena. *European Review of Social Psychology, 6*, 161–98. Comprehensive review of older deindividuation research, including classic theory and research on deindividuation. Introduces the SIDE model of deindividuation phenomena and some discussion of crowd behaviour.

Smith, J.R., & Haslam, S.A. (Eds.) (2017). *Social psychology: Revisiting the classic studies* (2nd ed.) London: Sage. This edited volume gathers together chapters by social psychology experts who cast a fresh eye over some classic studies. Of relevance to this chapter, you will find chapters on social facilitation and social loafing, and group decision-making.

Williams, K.D., Harkins, S.G., & Karau, S.J. (2003). Social performance. In M.A. Hogg & J. Cooper (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of social psychology* (pp. 327–46). London: Sage. Review of the literature on how being in a group influences various aspects of people's performance.

CHAPTER

11 INTERGROUP RELATIONS

In this chapter we review the bases of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. We consider how these phenomena play out in relations between different groups, such as those differentiated on the basis of gender, race, religion and age. Finally, we consider some of the vicious cycles in intergroup relations. By the end of this chapter, you will have learned about the fundamental social psychological processes that occur between groups of people.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Bases of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination
- Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination in different intergroup contexts
- Vicious cycles in intergroup relations

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You have probably noticed that people often resist being categorized. Try to impose a group label on someone – be it 'English', 'British', 'smoker', 'bisexual', 'feminist' or 'left-winger', to name a few – and there is a decent chance they will object. 'Don't pigeonhole me', 'don't label me' are familiar refrains. This phenomenon is not much studied by social psychologists, and we are inclined to think of it as a 'blind spot' in research as it stands. One of the reasons for this wariness about being slotted into a category probably relates to the desire for a distinctive identity (Brewer, 1991) (see Chapter 8). One does not want to be seen only as a member of a given group but also as an individual with unique qualities.

This suggests that people have an intuitive awareness of some of the social dangers inherent in being categorized. One danger stems from **stereotypes** – simplified but widely shared beliefs about the characteristics of groups and their members. Thus, you may find yourself being *stereotyped*, meaning that people will assume you must have the characteristics that are stereotypically associated with your group, even if they know nothing else about you. Further, and worse, you may find yourself the target of **prejudice**, a negative affective reaction to your group, so called because it can cause people to prejudge you. Finally, if people are prejudiced against you – and, as we shall see, even if they are not – you may find yourself a victim of **discrimination**, meaning that others treat you less well merely because of the group to which you belong.

Stereotype A simplified but widely shared belief about a characteristic of a group and its members.

Prejudice A negative, affective prejudgement about a group and its individual members.

Discrimination Negative treatment of a group member simply because of their group membership.

Stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination are the most often studied forms of **intergroup relations**. This is not to say that they are the most common forms of relations between groups. Children and adults, women and men, and members of different occupational groups generally live, work and play together with few problems: most contact between members of different groups is positive (Graf, Paolini, & Rubin, 2014; see also Chapter 12). It is the job of social psychologists, like other scientists, to understand and help solve problems, so it is not surprising that their research gravitates towards problems in intergroup relations. In this chapter, we will review the bases of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. We then consider how these phenomena play out in relations between different groups, such as those differentiated on the basis of gender, race, religion and age. Finally, we consider some of the vicious cycles in intergroup relations.

Intergroup relations The ways in which people who are members of groups think about, feel about, perceive and act towards members of other groups.

BASES OF STEREOTYPES, PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

Cognitive limitations and faults

One of the oldest theoretical perspectives on stereotyping and prejudice arose from the so-called 'cognitive revolution' of the 1950s and 60s. Informed by models of behaviour that gave great weight to cognitive processes, theorists speculated that stereotypes and prejudice may arise from humans' limitations as information processors. This theoretical perceptive casts people as cognitive misers (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; see also Chapter 3). There is just not enough space, particularly in working memory, for observers to take in each person, and each group, fully as they come. Instead of incorporating all the ambiguous, idiosyncratic and apparently contradictory information available, it is more realistic for observers to take shortcuts, known as heuristics (see Chapter 3). Stereotypes can be seen as heuristic understandings of groups and their members – necessarily simplified – but often containing a grain of truth (Campbell, 1967; Carpenter et al., 2017; Eyal & Epley, 2017; Jussim, 2005; Keonig & Eagly, 2014). For example, noticing

a trend for a group to have characteristics such as friendliness and warmth, individuals may save a lot of time and effort by assuming the trait is probably possessed by a new acquaintance – 'Luigi is Italian; Italians are warm and friendly; therefore I can expect Luigi to be warm and friendly.'

This idea is supported by many studies in which individuals are shown to draw upon stereotypes in order to furnish themselves with knowledge about individuals they barely know (e.g., Dijker & Koomen, 1996; Gilbert & Hixon, 1991). It is also supported by studies that examine when people do, and do not, apply stereotypes. For example, Stephan, Berscheid and Hatfield (1971) demonstrated that female undergraduate students were less prone to committing basic social cognitive errors when thinking about a potential dating partner than about a man they thought they would never meet. Apparently, when the stakes are high, people are motivated to expend more of their limited and precious cognitive resources, with dramatic effects on accuracy.

Pendry and Macrae (1994) conducted important experiments that suggested that this picture of stereotyping as an outcome of cognitive miserliness is too simple. They showed that people can be less prone to stereotyping others upon whom they depend – but only if they have the cognitive resources free to do so. In one of their experiments, Pendry and Macrae (1994) led undergraduate participants to believe that they would work with an elderly woman named 'Hilda' on a problem-solving task. Participants were also told that the best problem solvers in the experiment would be eligible for a £20 prize.

One of the key manipulations in Pendry and Macrae's (1994) experiment was deisgned to motivate participants (or not) to form accurate judgements about Hilda. In the *outcome-dependent* condition of the experiment, participants were told that they would work together with Hilda to jointly produce solutions, and would both receive the £20 prize if they were the most successful pair. In this condition, it pays to know exactly what Hilda is like. In the *outcome-independent* condition, participants were told that they and Hilda would each produce their own solutions, and the £20 would go to the best performing student and the best performing non-student partner. In this condition, it is less important to form a full and accurate understanding of Hilda.

After being told what they had to do, participants were given a personal profile of Hilda, of which half was consistent and half inconsistent with stereotypes of elderly women. While reading this profile, half of the participants were given an extra task which made it difficult to form an accurate impression of Hilda, no matter how much they wanted to. Specifically, they were exposed to a 'cognitive load' manipulation in which they had to mentally rehearse an eight-digit number while they were reading.

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Results showed that participants who expected to depend on Hilda later evaluated her in more accurate, less stereotypical terms than participants who did not. But this advantage disappeared under the cognitive load condition. In this case, participants are 'motivated but thwarted tacticians' (Pendry & Macrae, 1994, p. 303), who have good reason to spend time and effort in forming

an impression of Hilda but are unable to do so. In fact, in support of a cognitive miser view, you can see in Figure 11.1 that participants who were dependent on Hilda but made cognitively 'busy' relied *more* heavily on stereotypes.

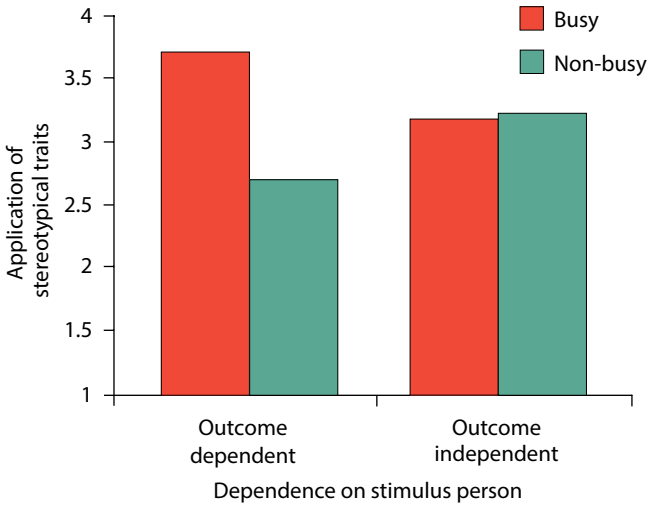

FIGURE 11.1 Cognitive busyness leads to greater use of stereotypes Effect of outcome dependence and cognitive busyness on ratings of the stimulus person, 'Hilda', on stereotype-consistent traits (in this study, 'intolerant, prudish and critical').

Source: Data from Pendry and Macrae (1994)

The cognitive miser perspective holds that stereotypes and prejudice may stem from the limited capacity of thought and memory – there is simply not enough storage or processing capacity to ensure a fully nuanced and authentic representation of people and groups. But as well as limitiations in the quantity of thought and memory, stereotypes and prejudice may also stem from its imperfect quality – notably its faults. People are prone to biases and mistakes, and thus can be compared to 'faulty computers' (Nisbett & Ross, 1980, p. 247). Ironically, many of these faults may have evolved as hard-wired shortcuts designed to compensate for our lack of capacity – we are doing the best we can with our limited cognitive resources (Gilbert, 1999). The upshot is, however, that if one's thought processes are inherently flawed, it does not necessarily help to expend more time thinking about a group and its members. One such flaw in human thinking appears to be the outgroup homogeneity effect (e.g., Quattrone & Jones, 1980).

Outgroup homogeneity

Have you ever heard anyone say about a particular racial group 'They all look the same to me'? This is an example of the **outgroup homogeneity effect**, or the tendency to exaggerate the similarities between outgroup members and the differences between ingroup members (e.g., Quattrone & Jones, 1980; Simon, 1992). People have a tendency to believe that members of other groups all look, think and behave alike, compared to the diverse looks, thoughts and actions of their own groups.

Outgroup homogeneity effect An exaggerated perception that members of outgroups are more similar to each other than members of ingroups.

It has been argued that this happens for two reasons. First, people are simply more familiar with their ingroups and have more experience interacting with ingroup members in a variety of contexts. Therefore, when they are asked to make judgements about a group's homogeneity, they are naturally able call to mind more examples (or 'exemplars') of ingroup members than outgroup members, and therefore perceive ingroups as more diverse than outgroups (Linville, Salovey & Fischer, 1986; Linville, Fischer & Salovey, 1989). Alternatively, others have argued that people are more likely to use exemplars when judging ingroups but more likely to rely on category-level information about the group as a whole when judging outgroups. This happens because people learn about ingroups from multiple exemplars but when learning about outgroups they tend to learn about a small number of prototypical people and therefore gain a more generalized perception of the groups (Judd & Park, 1988; Park, Judd, & Ryan, 1991).

Some recent research suggests that the outgroup homogeneity effect may also serve important, self-protective psychological purposes. Savitzky, Cone, Rubel and Eibach (2016) found that participants who received negative comments (e.g., on their work, or on their CVs) from several individuals were more likely to see those individuals as alike. Savitzky et al. reasoned that if we see the 'haters' as all the same, we can also see their negative comments are less credible, and thus less threatening to our self-image.

Other-race effect The tendency for people to better recognize faces of their own race than those of other races.

A related phenomenon is the **other-race effect** (also known as the cross-race effect or own-race bias). People are better able to recognize faces of their own race than those of other races. This effect appears to be reliable across cultural and racial groups (Kassin, Ellsworth & Smith, 1989; see Meissner & Brigham, 2001 for a review) and develops early in life. For example, Quinn, Lee, Pascalis and Tanaka (2016) found that at six months of age, White babies could differentiate between Black and Asian faces, but by nine months, could only differentiate between White and other-race faces. That is, they had lost the ability to distinguish between other-race faces, and could only differentiate between Whites and non-Whites.

As is the case for the outgroup homogeneity effect, researchers have argued that people are more experienced at distinguishing amongst people of the same race than other races, and therefore correctly identifying people of the same race is easier (e.g., Correll, Hudson, Guillermo & Earls, 2017). People may also engage in deeper processing when it comes to same-race faces (Chance & Goldstein, 1981), which enables them to more accurately identify who they have seen before. In keeping with this explanation, one study has shown that nine-month-old infants who were induced to pay attention to other-race (vs. same-race) faces on a computer screen were better at discriminating between them (Markant, Oakes & Amso, 2016).

This effect may also be accentuated by the context in which the identification is made. For example, Shriver, Young, Hugenberg, Bernstein and Lanter (2008) found that White middle-class participants were more successful at recognizing their own group (i.e., other White middle-class faces) in familiar settings (i.e., wealthy contexts) rather than unfamiliar settings (i.e., improverished contexts). Therefore, the context in which a face is seen, and the 'match' between the context and the face, can also determine how well it is recognized.

From a practical point of view, it is important to study how the other-race effect works in a variety of contexts. It may potentially help to explain why some people are incorrectly identified, especially in the case of racial minorities. If so, it has an important implication for eyewitness identification in criminal law: members of minority groups may be at greater risk of being incorrectly identified in eyewitness lineups. However, most research into the other-race effect has used tightly controlled stimuli, in which the lighting, size, viewing angle and context of photographed faces are carefully controlled. When participants are asked to identify pairs of images of the same person taken in real-world conditions, with varying lighting and conditions, results are mixed. One study indicated that under such conditions, participants are somewhat better, not worse, at identifying other-race (vs. same-race) faces (Laurence, Zhou & Mondloch, 2016). Another indicated that participants still learn same-race (vs. other-race) faces substantially faster under naturalistic conditions (Hayward, Favelle, Oxner, Chu & Lam, 2017).

Illusory correlation effect An exaggerated perception of a correlation between two variables. In intergroup relations, the perception that a behaviour is more frequently displayed by a minority than a majority group, when the behaviour is displayed equally by both groups, in proportional terms.

Illusory correlation

Another phenomenon demonstrating the importance of familiarity is the **illusory correlation effect**. Imagine that you live near the ground of Hometown Football Club. Whenever this team is playing at home, you see the procession of its fans walking to and from the ground. Once a year, this team has a home match with Neighbourtown Football Club. So you see this team's fans much less often. Each team has a minority of fans, let us say 5 per cent, who are hooligans – drunken, aggressive and loutish fans who make spectacles of themselves and are occasionally involved in violence. If asked, would you indicate, correctly, that hooliganism is as frequent, proportionately speaking, in the

two groups (see Table 11.1)? According to over 100 published demonstrations of the illusory correlation effect, the answer is probably no (Fiedler, 2004). In such cases, where a minority and a majority group are equally prone to an undesirable behaviour, this trick of the mind leads people to believe that the behaviour is actually more common among the minority group.

TABLE 11.1 Observed instances of hooligan and civilized behaviour

	Hooligan	Civilized
Hometown FC	100	1,900
Neighbourtown FC	5	95

The illusory correlation effect can be used to explain, in part, why certain undesirable behaviours are unfairly perceived to be more characteristic of real-life minority groups. Even if we allow that many stereotypes contain a 'kernel of truth', such that there are real differences between groups, we can expect any correlation to seem larger than it really is (McGarty, Haslam, Turner & Oakes, 1993). If you reflect for a few moments, we are sure you could think of a few possible examples of this phenomenon in real-life groups (see Figure 11.2).

Corbis

FIGURE 11.2 Illusory correlation effect Illusory correlation bias might make you think that hooliganism is more common among smaller groups, for example fans of the 'away' team versus the 'home' team, even when the same proportion of their fans are hooligans.

How can we explain the illusory correlation effect? One relatively simple and powerful explanation is that it stems from classical conditioning (see Chapter 4): the basic property of the way humans, like other animals, learn to evaluate and respond to the world. People learn that incompetent or antisocial behaviours are less common than competent or prosocial behaviours. When encountering another social group, its bad or incompetent behaviours flout our expectancies of how people generally behave. This quickly leads us to revise our beliefs about the group, since classical conditioning works by leading us to correct 'errors' in our predictions. As our mental representation becomes more strongly informed by multiple experiences of the group, each relatively rare instance of bad behaviour carries less weight. In keeping with this explanation, studies have have shown that the illusory correlation bias becomes less pronounced as minority groups become larger (Van Rooy, Vanhoomissen & van Overwalle, 2013) and as participants are exposed to more instances of its behaviour (Murphy, Schmeer, Vallee-Tourangeau, Mondragon & Hilton, 2011).

In a slightly different account, Fiedler (1991) argued that imperfections in human memory may help produce the illusory correlation effect. Memory for events is faulty, so people do not perfectly encode the actual ratio of positive to negative behaviours for each group. As time goes by, their estimate of this ratio shifts in the direction of a 50:50 split. This causes them to underestimate the proportion of good behaviours, and overestimate the proportion of bad ones, since bad behaviours are more rare. In our example in Table 11.1, the ratio was 5 per cent bad, 95 per cent good behaviour.

Why is this bias more pronounced for the behaviours of the minority group? According to Fiedler (1991), observers are exposed to fewer instances of the minority's group's behaviour, thus the observers' memory is weaker to begin with; and memory for the frequency of their behaviour shifts still further towards the 50:50 split. The result of this larger shift is that the ratio of negative to positive behaviours will seem higher for the minority than the majority group – the illusory correlation effect. Consistent with this explanation, Eder, Fiedler and Hamm-Eder (2011) found that the illusory correlation effect was stronger among participants who had a lower working memory capacity. Also, when they temporarily reduced participants' working memory with a *cognitive load* manipulation, the illusory correlation effect increased relative to a control group.

The most well-known explanation of the illusory correlation effect refers to the tendency for distinctive behaviours to capture our attention and receive the most elaborate processing (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976). Distinctiveness is a tricky concept to pin down; indeed, this is one of the criticisms of this approach to the illusory correlation bias (e.g., McGarty & de la Haye, 1997; Van Rooy, van Overwalle, Vanhoomissen, Labiouse & French, 2003). However, it is possible to define it in terms of mere statistical rarity. In this sense, minority behaviours are, by definition, distinctive relative to majority behaviours. Also, undesirable behaviours are rarer and thus more distinctive than desirable ones. So, undesirable behaviours by the minority group are distinctive on two counts: they seize the most attention and carry the most weight. As a result, they are easier to remember, and more likely to influence our evaluations than the bad behaviours of majority group members (see also Sherman, Kruschke, Sherman, Percy & Petrocelli, 2009).

The illusory correlation bias is a vivid, robust and well-explained bias, which would appear to underpin processes of stereotyping and prejudice. Recently, it has been linked to conservative political ideology, in that conservatives are more likely than liberals to form illusory correlations between negative information and minority groups (Carraro, Negri, Castelli & Pastore, 2014; Castelli & Carraro, 2011). This finding potentially explains why conservatives tend to hold more negative attitudes towards minority groups. It may lead to unduly harsh perceptions of minority groups or of outgroups with whom people have little direct experience. Certainly, it highlights how a little knowledge of an outgroup can be a dangerous thing. That said, no one is pretending that illusory correlations are enough to explain all forms of stereotyping and prejudice. Further, some have questioned the sense in which an illusory correlation always deserves to be called a 'bias'. It may be legitimate to evaluate a group according to the sum total of good things it does, rather than the proportion (Berndsen, McGarty, van der Pligt & Spears, 2001; McGarty et al., 1993).

Category accentuation

The illusory correlation effect refers to a cognitive error that can occur when people have more information about one group than another. A still more basic error is *category accentuation,* in which the *mere act of categorization* can distort the way people think about members of groups and the groups themselves. Placing objects into categories changes the way they are perceived, such that differences between categories are maximized and differences within categories are minimized (Tajfel, 1959).

Category accentuation was first demonstrated in a classic study by Tajfel and Wilkes (1963). Participants were presented with an array of lines of varying lengths. In one condition, the lines were unlabelled. In another condition, shorter lines were labelled, with the letter A, whereas longer lines were labelled B (see Figure 11.3). Thus, Tajfel and Wilkes had created two categories, A and B, comprising short and long lines respectively. When lines were categorized in this way, the difference between the shortest and longer line in the whole array was perceived to be larger, even though the objective difference was identical in the unlabelled condition. Tajfel and Wilkes (1963) found much the same differences when observers made judgements about people. Many researchers have since found that differences between people in different categories are accentuated, while those between people in the same category are minimized (e.g., Corneille & Judd, 1999; McGarty & Penny, 1988; Queller, Schell & Mason, 2006).

The category accentuation effect extends beyond judgements about individuals. When asked to make judgements about the categories themselves, people also make a similar mistake. For example, Krueger, Rothbart and Siriam (1989) told participants that sprinters generally weigh more than marathon runners and, in a 'category learning' phase, presented them with the body weights of a number of individuals who, by and large, conformed to this rule. In a later 'category change' phase, participants were presented with more body weight information, this time about people who either confirmed (heavy sprinters, featherweight marathon runners) or bucked (lithe sprinters, bulky marathoners) the trend. Participants' estimates of the average weight of these two groups changed more in the first condition than in the second: that is, when the new category members accentuated, rather than minimized, the difference between groups. Apparently, people attend to and remember more easily people who confirm, rather than disconfirm, category-based expectations (see also Krueger and Rothbart, 1990).

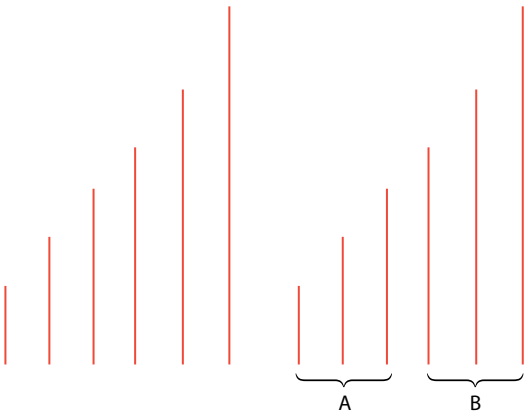

FIGURE 11.3 Illustration of Tajfel and Wilkes's (1963) study The labels caused participants to perceive the lines in group A as similar to each other, the lines in group B as similar to each other, and to perceive larger differences between the line groups.

Cognitive motivations: dogmatism, need for structure and closed-mindedness

Stereotypes and prejudice stem not only from limitations in how people are *able* to think. It is also important to consider how they *want* to think. As we considered in Chapter 3, human beings share a desire to understand their environment, and a general aversion to uncertainty or ambiguity about matters that are important to them. A number of social psychologists have linked this *epistemic* (knowledge) need with intergroup perceptions. This epistemic need can engender stereotypes and prejudice by causing people to seek haste, simplicity and clarity in the way they process information. Stereotypes meet these needs because they provide explanations for real or imagined patterns in behaviour. They are a type of social knowledge that helps us feel that we can understand our social environment in relatively simple terms. Similarly, prejudice can be seen as a natural reaction to groups who seem to threaten our understanding of the world. For example, one way of feeling that we understand our social environment is to classify behaviours into 'right' and 'wrong'. Prejudice can be seen as a response to groups of people whose values and behaviour seem to contradict our sense of right and wrong (Brandt, Reyna, Chambers, Crawford & Wetherell, 2014; Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers & Motyl, 2017; Duckitt, 2006).

Most tests of this approach have focused on individual differences. The reasoning behind these tests is that some people experience these epistemic needs more acutely than others, and

those people should be the most prone to stereotyping and prejudice. Rokeach (1956, 1960) was among the first to take this approach. According to Rokeach, individuals with high levels of antipathy towards outgroups were likely to share a trait he termed **dogmatism**. Dogmatism is the tendency to be able to tolerate mutually inconsistent beliefs by isolating them from each other in memory. This rigid cognitive structure tends to be resistant to change. Rokeach (1960) developed a measure of dogmatism and found some evidence that it is related to prejudice towards various groups. However, the measure he designed seemed to measure not only dogmatism but also some rather specific ideological and personality variables. It seemed to overlap with a variable we shall review shortly called authoritarianism (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson & Sanford, 1950) – sharing its concern with personal inadequacy, power and status (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994; for a review of the historical relationship between dogmatism and authoritarianism, see Brown, 1995).

Dogmatism The tendency for people to be able to tolerate mutually inconsistent beliefs by isolating them from each other in memory.

Nonetheless, dogmatism remains an important construct in the study of prejudice. Although it is still sometimes measured with scales descended from Rockeach's dogmatism scale (e.g., Bronstein, Dovidio & Cannon, 2017), it is often conceptualized as a particularly rigid attachment to the literal and infallible truth of a religious or political doctrine. In this tradition, Kossowska, Czernatowicz-Kukuczka, and Sekerdej (2017) showed that highly religious orthodox people, *and* dogmatic atheists, expressed prejudice towards people who violated their values – apparently because they perceived these people as a threat to their values. Brandt and van Tongeren (2017) also found that religious fundamentalists were prejudiced towards those who did not share their views. Crucially, however, they observed the same pattern in reverse: less religious, less fundamentalist people were were also prejudiced towards fundamentalists. Just as Kossowska et al. (2017) found, this prejudice was mediated by perceptions of threat.

Personal need for structure (PNS) A person's preference for structure and clarity in most situations, and level of annoyance experienced by ambiguity.

These results have two interesting implications. First, they show that, as well as causing a person to be prejudiced towards some groups, dogmatism also causes them to become a target of prejudice. Second, they suggest that people, whether they are dogmatic or not, are prone to prejudice towards groups whose values differ from their own and whom they perceive to be threatening.

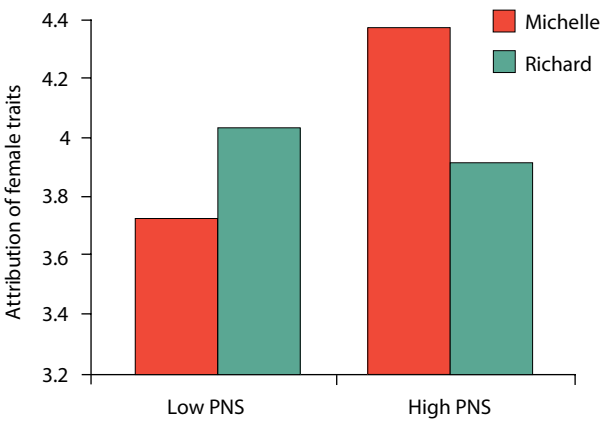

FIGURE 11.4 Personal need for structure and stereotyping
Participants who were high in PNS may be more likely to stereotype others in ambiguous situations (by assigning more 'feminine' traits to female targets) than those low in PNS.

Source: Data from Neuberg and Newsom (1993)

The personal need for structure (PNS) is a construct that addresses human beings' epistemic concerns in a more direct way than dogmatism (Neuberg & Newsom, 1993). People who score highly on this variable – indicating a preference for structure in most situations – tend to stereotype others more. For example, Neuberg and Newsom (1993) presented participants with one of two descriptions of an undergraduate student. These descriptions were identical except that the student was called either 'Richard' or 'Michelle'. Sure enough, participants who were high in PNS assigned more stereotypically 'female', negative traits such as irrationality and gullibility to Michelle than to Richard. Participants who were low in PNS did not do this (see Figure 11.4) (see also Schaller, Boyd, Yohannes & O'Brien, 1995).

Recently, Friesen, Kay, Eibach and Galinsky (2014) carried out a series of studies to test the hypothesis that social hierarchies satisfy the need for structure. In one study, participants answered questions measuring their personal need for structure (Neuberg & Newsom, 1993; see 'Exploring further' for another example). They also answered questions measuring their preference for hierarchies in workplace settings. It was found that preference for hierarchy was higher among individuals high in PNS. The personal need for structure may therefore include the preference for individuals, and perhaps groups, to occupy particular social roles that place some groups further up, or down, the hierarchy than others.

Related to PNS is the need for cognitive closure (NFCC) (Kruglanski, 2006; Roets, Kruglanski, Kossowska, Pierro & Hong, 2015; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). This is defined as a general desire to seek 'an answer on a given topic, any answer ... compared to confusion and ambiguity' (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994, p. 1094). This latent desire is viewed as being expressed in five facets: the desire for predictability, a preference for order and structure, discomfort with ambiguity, decisiveness, and closed-mindedness (discussed in Chapter 6 in relation to persuasion). Like the need for structure, it has been shown to be associated with prejudice and stereotyping. For example, Dijksterhuis, van Knippenberg, Kruglanski and Schaper (1996) found that participants who scored highly on a measure of NFCC tended to recall more stereotype-consistent information about a group of football hooligans, whereas participants who were low in NFCC recalled relatively more stereotype-inconsistent information (see Roets & Van Hiel, 2011a for an overview).

In sum, research supports the basic idea that the more an individual is motivated to understand the world in simple, highly structured terms, the more they are likely to rely on stereotypes and be prejudiced. Epistemic concerns may also shape stereotyping and especially prejudice in an indirect or *mediated* way. For example, NFCC is related to variables that themselves have been shown to predict prejudice towards groups that are perceived as a threat to the social order, or as deserving of their lowly status. These variables include political conservatism (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski & Sulloway, 2003) and certain values (see Chapter 4) such as security, conformity and tradition (Calogero, Bardi & Sutton, 2009). It is to these variables, associated with preferences or ideologies surrounding how society should ideally be ordered, that we now turn.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Below is the personal need for structure scale (Thompson, Naccarato & Parker, 1989). Complete it for yourself and determine whether you are high, low or moderate in personal need for structure. The items marked with an asterisk need to be reverse scored before you can tally your results and calculate your mean. Once you have calculated your mean, a score from 1–26 is deemed to be low in PNS, a score of 27–37 is below average, 38–46 is average, 47–57 is above average and 58–72 is high. Knowing what you know about social psychological research, do your results mean that you will be more or less likely to stereotype and be prejudiced?

Read each of the following statements and decide how much you agree with each according to your attitudes, beliefs and experiences. It is important for you to realize that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. People are different, and we are interested in how you feel. Please respond according to the scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree.

1. **It upsets me to go into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it.**
2. **I'm not bothered by things that interrupt my daily routine. ***
3. **I enjoy having a clear and structured mode of life.**
4. **I like to have a place for everything and everything in its place.**
5. **I enjoy being spontaneous.***
6. **I find that a well-ordered life with regular hours makes my life tedious.***
7. **I don't like situations that are uncertain.**
8. **I hate to change my plans at the last minute.**
9. **I hate to be with people who are unpredictable.**
10. **I find that a consistent routine enables me to enjoy life more.**
11. **I enjoy the exhilaration of being in unpredictable situations.***
12. **I become uncomfortable when the rules in a situation are not clear.**

Source: Thompson et al. (1989). Reproduced by permission of Taylor and Francis Group, LLC, a division of Informa plc

Ideologies

The study of the role of ideology in intergroup relations has a long history in social psychology. Arguably, the person who has had the most profound, far-reaching impact on the study of intergroup relations is Karl Marx, with his collaborator Friedrich Engels. Marx and Engels ([1848]1998) were especially interested in conflicts between the social classes. For Marx, social classes arise from excess production in an economy. When agriculture or industry are efficient enough to produce more than is required for survival at a subsistence level, the *ruling classes* emerge who own the means of production (land, factories). The ruling classes dominate the *working classes* who supply the labour required to operate the means of production. In economies based largely on agriculture, the most fundamental classes are landowners and peasants. The bourgeoisie (or capitalists) and the proletariat (or working class) are the most basic and familiar of the classes in industrialized economies based on mass production (for a more fine-grained analysis of social class, see Giddens, 1981).

For Marx, these classes have inherently different, and conflicting, interests. Class conflict stems from the fact that it is in the interests of the ruling class to retain control of the means of production and to perpetuate their exploitation of the working class. For their part, it is in the interests of the working class to overthrow this exploitation and share in the profits that stem from ownership of the means of production. Two key concepts developed by Marx have a strongly social psychological flavour. For Marx, the unequal class system is preserved by 'false consciousness'. The working classes are distracted from awareness of their disadvantaged position in the class system, their common interests with fellow working-class people and their competing interests with the ruling class. Ideologies, such as the Protestant work ethic and religious notions of providence (that people's position in society is divinely ordained), play a key role in keeping people in a state of false consciousness. In contrast, 'class consciousness' emerges when the fog is lifted and people become aware of the implications of social class.

In their general form, some of Marx's key ideas are incorporated in all the approaches we are about to consider, including authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, realistic conflict theory and social identity theory. These are:

1. Groups have unequal levels of status in society.
2. Individuals within these groups tend to have interests in common.
3. These groups tend to have conflicting interests.
4. Members of these groups are not fully aware of their interests and hence fail to act on them.
5. Awareness is hampered by ideologies that obscure status inequalities, justify them or make them seem unchangeable.

Authoritarianism

Adorno et al. (1950) were the first to link the preference for hierarchy to prejudice. Their research, like Milgram's (1961) studies of obedience (see Chapter 9), was largely an attempt to make some sense of the Holocaust of the 1940s. The key difference is that whereas Milgram (1961) looked for causes of evil intergroup behaviour in the power of situations, Adorno et al. sought causes in the personalities of wrongdoers and their supporters. The result was the concept of the 'authoritarian personality'. Adorno et al. were able to show that people with this type of personality were indeed more prejudiced. However, the scale they deployed, known as the F-scale (F for fascism), was not reliable or valid (Altemeyer, 1981). Also, their concept seemed to resonate with politically right-wing, rather than left-wing, forms of **authoritarianism**

Authoritarianism
A form of social organization characterized by preference for, and submission to, authority.

(Rokeach, 1960). Thus, it tended to account better for prejudice towards groups that right-wingers, rather than left-wingers, seem to dislike (e.g., the poor, as opposed to the aristocracy).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Locate and read the excellent biographical entry on Theodor Adorno on Wikipedia. Adorno was a brilliant individual, who, in addition to his social scientific work, was a public intellectual and a music composer. Like several eminent social psychologists in the second half of the 20th century, Adorno was Jewish and emigrated from Germany in the 1930s, although unlike many others, he returned to Germany after the Second World War. What other major Jewish social psychologists can you find who lived through the Holocaust? How do you think this experience influenced their thinking?

Adorno's ideas and methods were refined by Altemeyer (1981, 1998), who put forward the concept of **right-wing authoritarianism** and developed a much improved scale to measure it. This scale measures the three components of this concept:

Right-wing authoritarianism An individual differences variable characterized by authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression and conventionalism.

1. Conventionalism: the desire for adherence to traditional social values and mores
2. Authoritarian aggression: the desire to aggress against, or punish, those who defy these social conventions
3. Authoritarian submission: the tendency to yield to authority.

Altemeyer (1998) found that right-wing authoritarians are more prejudiced towards a range of groups, particularly those who are traditionally low in status (e.g., Black people) or who seem to flout traditional values (e.g., gay people).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Look for research on *left-wing* authoritarianism, using Google Scholar or another research database. Compare and contrast this variable with right-wing authoritarianism. Why do you think relatively little research has been done on this topic? Does it suggest that social psychologists tend to be rather left-wing and are thus more eager to demonstrate the shortcomings of right-wing ideology? Or is it because left-wing authoritarianism is simply less powerful and wide-reaching in its effects?

Although Altemeyer's (1998) results are clear and compelling, debate surrounds how they should be interpreted. Altemeyer explained them in terms of personality processes, arguing that something about the psychological makeup of authoritarian people creates a need to be prejudiced. However, others see right-wing authoritarianism as more like an ideology than a facet of someone's character. In support of this view, authoritarianism turns out to be more strongly related to attitudes and values than to deep-seated personality dimensions (Heaven & Connors, 2001; Saucier, 2000). Further, right-wing authoritarianism changes in response to situational forces. For example, when the social order is threatened, people become more authoritarian (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003). This does not seem to be compatible with the view that right-wing authoritarianism is wired into people's character by their genes or childhood experiences.

TIME TO REFLECT

Do you think that authoritarianism is always a bad thing? What might be some of the benefits of authoritarianism? Can you think of ways to test your ideas?

Social dominance orientation

Social dominance orientation
An individual differences variable that measures people's preference for hierarchy within any social system.

The relationship between ideology and intergroup relations is addressed more squarely by another key concept in social psychology – **social dominance orientation** (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Like right-wing authoritarianism, this concept is 'multidimensional', in that it comprises more than one component:

1. a general preference for hierarchical, as opposed to equal, relations between groups
2. a desire for one's own group to dominate or be superior to other groups.

And, like right-wing authoritarianism, it enjoys a good deal of research support. For example, Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth and Malle (1994) found that individuals who scored highly on social dominance orientation tended to be prejudiced towards a range of social groups, such as Black people and gay people, and opposed social policy measures designed to enhance the welfare and esteem of these groups. They also tended to endorse beliefs that legitimized the unequal status of different groups, such as the belief (despite evidence to the contrary) that in America, everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed regardless of the ethnic group they were born into (for more detail on the legitimization of the status quo, see Chapter 14).

As illustrated by right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation, the development of new concepts inspires research that uncovers valuable insights into the causes of prejudice and other social behaviours. But there is a danger inherent in this creative process – we can end up with too many variables, each claiming to explain the same phenomenon. A key aim of science is parsimony – the explanation of the complex phenomena of the world in simple and understandable terms (Chapter 1). As Occam pointed out in the 14th century, when making sense of the world, our arguments should be as simple as possible, with the fewest possible assumptions: in other words, we should try to posit the existence of as few things as we can. Each time we add an assumption or posit that some additional variable explains reality, we increase the chances that one of our assumptions is wrong or one of the variables we have proposed does not exist. Thus, it is important to consider whether right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation really are different, having different effects on intergroup relations, instead of just being superficially different ways of describing the same basic processes.

Fortunately, it turns out they are different. Duckitt (2006) measured participants' right-wing authoritarianism as well as their social dominance orientation. He found that high scores on right-wing authoritarianism were correlated with prejudice towards groups perceived to pose a threat to the social order, as measured on items such as: 'They seem to reject moral values that are important to me.' In contrast, social dominance orientation was positively correlated with prejudice towards groups that seem to be in competition with the ingroup (e.g., 'If they make economic gains, people like me will be worse off'). These results highlight the essential difference between the two variables. Right-wing authoritarianism is associated with perceiving the world as a dangerous place, and striving to preserve society from threats to its shared values, cohesion and safety. Social dominance orientation involves the perception of the world as a competitive jungle in which dog

eats dog, and is concerned with preserving a clear hierarchy within which one's group is highly placed (for other differences between these variables, see Duriez & Van Hiel, 2002; Heaven & Connors, 2001). Social dominance orientation has been recently linked with other, more indirect indices of prejudice, such as permissive attitudes towards sexist language (Douglas & Sutton, 2014) and resistance to intercultural dialogue – that is, an unwillingness to talk to members of a lower status group about their shared and different experiences (Cargile, 2017).

Ethnocentrism and the struggle for superiority

As we have seen, social dominance orientation is ideological in that it reflects a preference for a clear status hierarchy, or 'pecking order', in society. However, its second component is not ideological, equating instead to the desire for 'us' to dominate 'them'. More generally, people seem to want their own social group to be superior in some sense to others. This desire may ultimately stem from what people want for themselves. For example, many social groups, such as teams, companies, political movements and armies, work collaboratively in the face of competition from other groups. Individuals within these groups are better off if their group functions as a collective. This basic pattern of relationships – cooperation within groups, competition between groups – is a common feature of human experience. The competitive nature of relations between groups can easily spill over into prejudice and intergroup conflict. This is especially so in 'zero-sum' situations where resources can only be gained by one group at the expense of the other (e.g., there is only so much land in central Europe that can be claimed as territory; similarly, there can be only one winner of the Eurovision Song Contest). This approach to intergroup relations can be traced back to Marx's ideas about class conflict, and is exemplified by **realistic group conflict theory** (Sherif, 1966).

Realistic group conflict theory Theory of intergroup conflict that explains intergroup behaviour with respect to the need to secure scarce resources.

The quest for the superiority of the ingroup is not all about material welfare, however. As we saw in Chapter 2, individuals strive to achieve a positive and coherent identity. As we saw in Chapter 8, a positive image of the self depends on a positive image of the groups to which one belongs, which, in turn, depends on seeing one's group in positive terms relative to other groups. This approach to intergroup relations is exemplified by social identity theory (see also Chapter 8). Some of the different emphases between these two theories are shown in Table 11.2.

TABLE 11.2 Characteristics of realistic group conflict theory and social identity theory

	Realistic group conflict theory	Social identity theory
Groups are principally	Collectives working to achieve common goals	Social categories (although this includes collectives and many other types of group)
Prejudice and intergroup conflict stem primarily from	Competition over finite resources	The desire to feel positively about the ingroup
The most important resources are	Material and political, e.g., territory, money and power	Symbolic, e.g., markers of esteem and prestige
Groups strive for	Absolute resources – groups strive to maximize how many resources they control in absolute terms, more than in relation to others	Relative resources – superiority in comparison with others is more important than absolute level of resources
Individual-level motivation	Material security, affiliation with ingroup members	Self-esteem, sense of meaning and understanding

In general, realistic group conflict theory and social identity theory emphasize different aspects of intergroup relations. Whereas realistic group conflict theory highlights the need to secure scarce resources for the ingroup, social identity theory focuses on the need to view the ingroup positively. Other differences in emphasis are shown in Table 11.2, and are highlighted by probably the most famous and archetypal tests inspired by each approach to intergroup relations: Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood and Sherif's ([1954]1961) 'Robbers Cave' study, and the first 'minimal group paradigm' pioneered by Tajfel, Billig, Bundy and Flament (1971).

Although realistic group conflict theory and social identity theory emphasize different strategic priorities, they share an essential feature that differentiates them from the cognitive, personality and ideological approaches considered so far. In explaining relations between groups, their focus moves beyond the processes inside an individual to include processes occurring at the group level. Intergroup contexts cause people to identify themselves and others with the groups to which they belong. They then interact with each other *as members of groups*. They start to see their own group as better than its rivals, in a mindset known as **ethnocentrism**, and start to pursue strategic objectives on behalf of their group.

Ethnocentrism
Preference for one's own group, and features of one's own group, over others.

The Robbers Cave study

Sherif et al. ([1954]1961) devised a vivid test of their ideas about how prejudice and conflict spring from a mix of intragroup cooperation and intergroup competition. Inspired by William Golding's 1954 novel *The Lord of the Flies,* they decided to take children, whose behaviour may be more malleable than adults, out of their normal environment to an isolated locale, where, free from the civilizing influences that normally constrain them, the development of conflict and prejudice could be studied. They created a summer camp they called the 'Robbers Cave' for 11-year-old boys in rural Oklahoma. The subsequent field experiment unfolded in three key phases:

- Phase 1 – group attachment: the boys arrived and were divided into separate groups, staying at opposite ends of the camp in cabins located far apart. For a week, they engaged in fun, recreational activities like swimming, sports and walking, in blissful ignorance of the other group's existence. They chose names for their groups – the 'Rattlers' and the 'Eagles', respectively – along with group symbols, flags and even T-shirts.
- Phase 2 – intergroup competition: having established the kind of ingroup attachment and cooperation that is supposed to underlie prejudice and intergroup conflict, the experimenters then introduced the other theoretically important ingredient: competition between groups. They brought the two groups together to compete in a series of contests. Not only would the winning group receive a trophy, but its members would receive desirable prizes such as pocket knives. So, the interests of individuals were strongly aligned with the interests of their group. Almost immediately, there were signs of ethnocentrism – boys saw their own group as superior to the other. Similarly, conflicts arose between the groups almost straightaway. These were initially confined to taunts and name calling, but then shifted up a gear to include symbolic acts of intergroup violence; for example, one group burned the other's flag. These triggered a familiar tit-for-tat pattern of aggression and retaliation between groups. Groups raided each others' cabins and stole property, used increasingly hostile language to describe each other and displayed ever more intense ethnocentrism. It is worth noting that the Robbers Cave study was run three times, with different groups of boys in different summers. On two of these runs, the situation became so hostile and stressful that the study had to

be abandoned on ethical grounds. (You may recall from Chapter 9 that the same fate befell the Stanford Prison Experiment and the BBC Prison Study – both of which were inspired somewhat by the Robbers Cave.) On just the final run, the study proceeded to the final phase.

- Phase 3 – intergroup reconciliation: in this phase of the study, the experimenters attempted to douse the flames of conflict they had fanned so effectively. One technique they tried was to increase the amount of contact between the groups, for example by having them eat together. Consistent with much work on the **contact hypothesis**, which we will discuss in more detail in Chapter 12, merely increasing contact between the groups did not work and, if anything, worsened the situation. For example, shared mealtimes were treated less as an opportunity to iron out differences than to throw food at members of the rival group. In contrast, what really worked was the introduction of shared or **superordinate goals**. Each group retained a separate identity, but was posed challenges that could only be solved in cooperation with the other group. In one case, the experimenters secretly sabotaged the camp's water supply and had all the boys work together to repair it. On another occasion, the boys all had to work together to pull a broken-down truck out of some mud – using a rope that had earlier featured in a competitive game of tug-of-war. The effect of working together was to reduce the ethnocentrism and intergroup hostility that had so dominated life in the camp before. For example, the percentage of outgroup members who were rated negatively after cooperation was significantly lower than the amount classified negatively after competition (see Figure 11.5). Some boys even struck up friendships with members of the other group.

Contact hypothesis Theory of prejudice reduction, which proposes that prejudice and conflict between groups can be reduced by bringing them together.

Superordinate goal A goal that two (or more) groups can aspire to but that can only be achieved by working together in cooperation.

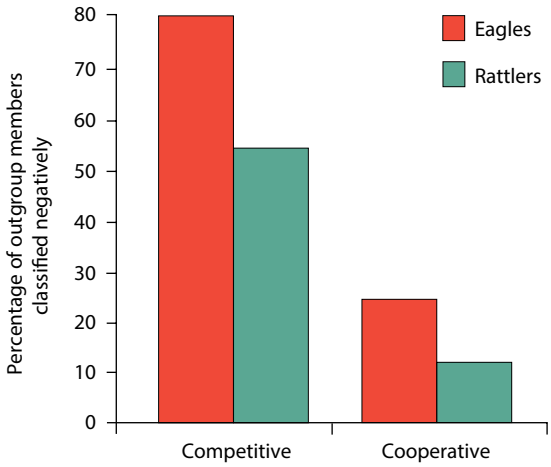

FIGURE 11.5 Superordinate goals reduce ethnocentrism In the Robbers Cave study, the introduction of superordinate goals significantly reduced ethnocentrism. For example, the percentage of outgroup members who were classified negatively after cooperation was much lower than the percentage of outgroup members who were classified negatively after competition.

Source: Data from Sherif et al. ([1954]1961)

The essential findings of the Robbers Cave study have been widely replicated (Fisher, 1990). The study has been highly influential in social psychology, especially as the flagship for realistic group conflict theory and its descendants (e.g., Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Its influence also extends far beyond social psychology. Although we hope you have not had an experience as aversive as the Robbers Cave, there is a good chance that you have undergone some of the 'team-building' exercises that it and similar studies have inspired. These are widely used by organizations such as schools, sports clubs and corporations to foster ingroup cooperation and prevent or defuse intergroup conflict. Although they may sometimes feel forced and 'cheesy', the evidence suggests that they are generally effective in enhancing relations within groups (Blake & Mouton, 1961; Klein et al., 2009).

One of the great strengths of the Robbers Cave study, like many of the iconic studies in social psychology, is its resemblance to the real-life situations from which spring many problematic social behaviours. The boys were immersed in an unfolding situation that engaged a range of intense emotions and motivations, and fostered dynamic social relationships (see Figure 11.6). This richness is invaluable but comes at a price – it is difficult to tease out the influence of any given causal factor. Which of the many conditions of the Robbers Cave field experiment were necessary, and which, if any, were sufficient (that is,

enough on their own) to bring about the various forms of conflict and ethnocentrism that arose? In particular, the Robbers Cave study left an important question unanswered – can socially significant displays of prejudice and ethnocentrism arise even when groups are not locked into a zero-sum, competitive situation? Is it enough simply for people to be in an intergroup context?

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FIGURE 11.6 Robbers Cave study of intergroup relations Sherif et al.'s ([1954]1961) Robbers Cave study demonstrated how prejudice and conflict can arise from the creation of a competitive environment.

TIME TO REFLECT

The normative climate of a social psychological experiment, like any other social situation, is affected by language. Sherif et al. told the boys that their camp was named after a local geographical feature, but in fact there was no Robbers Cave in the vicinity. The boys chose, and were permitted, to name their groups after predatory animals – rattle snakes and eagles. How might these choices have affected the normative climate of the camp? What other kinds of names might have been chosen and how might this have affected the results of this experiment? Can we see the experimenters' choice of name for the camp, and their permissive stance to the boys' choices of group names, as a 'demand characteristic'? How does this compare to the way that Zimbardo set up the Stanford Prison Experiment (see Chapter 9)? Finally, reflect on the names of many situations, systems and groups in real life. For example, many countries in the West claim that they are engaged in a 'war on drugs', army units are often given names like 'the Desert Rats' and so on. To what extent can we see these as strategic choices designed to affect the behaviour of people in these situations?

The minimal group paradigm

The classic minimal group study by Tajfel et al. (1971) seemed to provide an answer to the question left open by Sherif et al.'s Robbers Cave study. The main aim of the study was to examine whether merely placing people into different social categories can generate ethnocentrism and problematic intergroup relations. A further aim of the study was to re-examine whether prejudice and conflict are necessarily motivated by the desire to procure as

many resources for the ingroup as possible. Tajfel et al. asked a sample of British schoolboys to evaluate unfamiliar and unattributed paintings, and then divided them into two groups. One group was told that they had preferred paintings by the artist Kandinsky, whereas the other was told that their preference was for Klee. In fact, participants' assignment to these groups was entirely random and had nothing to do with their evaluations of the paintings. The participants knew that everybody had been categorized, but did not know which of the other boys belonged to the Kandinsky or the Klee groups.

Thus, Tajfel et al. (1971) had created *minimal groups,* based on an apparently trivial (in fact, bogus) difference, lacking history, common goals or indeed any prospect of a common future, and independent of interpersonal friendships. To test whether the boys would discriminate even on the basis of this minimal group basis, Tajfel et al. told them that they were to participate in a decision-making task. Each boy was given several opportunities to assign points to two other boys, on the understanding that the points would be converted into real money at the end of the experiment. These two boys were known only by their code number and group membership: one was always in the Kandinsky and one in the Klee group. The decision maker was asked to choose from a matrix of allocations.

The first key finding was that boys assigned more points to ingroup than to outgroup members. This seemed to show that merely belonging to a group is, indeed, enough to produce ingroup favouritism. The second key finding was that in striving to favour ingroup members in *relative* terms, participants were prepared to sacrifice some of the points they assigned to the ingroup in *absolute* terms. For example, imagine that a boy can choose to either give 17 points to the ingroup and 21 to the outgroup member, or 18 to the ingroup and 23 to the outgroup member. Neither of these choices is attractive because they entail giving less to the ingroup member. But the first choice is less unattractive, because the ingroup member is relatively worse off by only 4 points, rather than 5. Typically, participants will opt for this allocation, even though it gives the ingroup member 1 less point in absolute terms. To paraphrase a familiar expression, people will cut off their own group's nose to spite another group's face. Figure 11.7 provides an illustration of the possible allocations that can be made in the **minimal group paradigm**.

Minimal group paradigm
Experimental manipulation that tests the effects of mere categorization on behaviour.

In a typical study using the minimal group paradigm, participants are asked to circle the numbers on each line to indicate the resources they would like to allocate to the ingroup and the resources they would like to allocate to the outgroup. The numbers typically signify money. The numbers vary from matrix to matrix and different matrices are used in different studies, but this is an example:

Ingroup member	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	(13)	14
Outgroup member	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	(2)	1

From an analysis of how participants distribute points across a number of different matrices like the one above, it is possible to determine which of the following is a participant's preferred strategy in allocating resources:

- F – fairness: the most equal allocation
- MD – maximum different: the most ingroup-biased allocation which makes the ingroup member most well off relative to the outgroup member, regardless of the absolute number of points they receive
- MIP – maximum ingroup profit: the allocation which gives the ingroup member most points, regardless of how much the outgroup member receives
- MJP – maximum joint profit: the allocation that awards the highest number of points (regardless of the different between the groups)
- FAV – favouritism: employment of MIP and MD

FIGURE 11.7 The possible allocations in the minimal group paradigm

This study has been replicated hundreds of times with variations across many settings (Diehl, 1990; Hewstone, Rubin & Willis, 2002; for a brief and accessible review, see Otten, 2016). Its key finding seems to give strong support for the social identity approach to intergroup relations, especially to discrimination. Just as social identity theory predicts, people seem to be pursuing the symbolic superiority of their group and are prepared to spend material resources in doing so. It is important to note that the minimal group paradigm is not a zero-sum situation – participants are not forced to divide a fixed total between two groups, but can choose allocations that involve a higher or lower total (in our example above, the first option entails a total of 38 points, and the second 41 points). In contrast, a zero-sum situation means that one cannot give relatively less to the outgroup without also giving absolutely more to the ingroup. Thus, it is impossible in these situations, unlike Tajfel et al.'s (1971) study, to disentangle the two motives. This is a great strength of the minimal group paradigm and probably mirrors many real-life situations in which groups stand to make mutual gains if they can find ways to cooperate with each other. Now, read the Critical Focus box that further explores the minimal group paradigm.

CRITICAL FOCUS

The minimal group paradigm

Despite its success, the minimal group paradigm has been critiqued on a number of grounds.

1 *Is the minimal group paradigm too minimal?*

An obvious critique of the minimal group paradigm is that it is different from most everyday group contexts, and therefore lacks ecological validity (see Chapter 1). Real groups tend to have a history and a future, and tend to feature bonds between their members that are created by ongoing interactions, or based on within-group similarities and between-group differences that appear to be meaningful to participants. The stakes are generally much lower in the minimal group studies, where participants typically allocate tokens or tasks, than in real-life situations where intergroup relations have enduring and often profound consequences.

These charges cannot be denied, but the question is how important they are. The point of the minimal group paradigm was precisely to create an experimentally controlled situation in which the effects of merely being categorized could be studied in isolation from other factors. This scientific requirement means that the experiments must necessarily be different from many real-life situations in which the various aspects of group life go hand in hand. And, it is always important when evaluating a particular methodology to compare the results it produces with those from other types of research. If other studies, which do not share the limitations of the research in question, produce similar results, then we have converging evidence for its conclusions. In this case, experiments with groups that have an enduring history have revealed much the same pattern of ingroup-favouring allocations as in Tajfel et al.'s (1971) study (e.g., Amancio, 1989; Mullen, Brown & Smith, 1992). A meta-analysis of over 200 studies showed that people are just as biased in minimal group studies as they are when interacting with members of real-world groups (Balliet, Wu & De Dreu, 2014).

2 *Is the minimal group paradigm not minimal enough?*

Another, less intuitive critique of the minimal group paradigm is that it is not sufficiently minimal: participants may imagine that their assignment into categories reflects some underlying psychological characteristic. For example, our preference for different artists may seem to say something about how open-minded, conservative and sensation-seeking we are. In many minimal group studies, participants are even instructed that a range of unspecified psychological differences distinguishes people from the two groups (e.g., Elder, Douglas & Sutton, 2006). This raises the possibility that observed patterns of intergroup relations in these experiments do not stem from the mere fact of categorization but also require that these categories are seen to have some deeper meaning. However, anticipating this criticism, researchers have created groups that are yet more minimal, in which groups are merely called 'X' or 'Y' and participants are explicitly told that their assignment to groups is entirely random.

Even under these conditions, ingroup favouritism is to be found (e.g., Billig & Tajfel, 1973).

3 *Is the minimal group paradigm subject to demand characteristics?*

Another criticism of the minimal group paradigm refers to the ever present danger of demand characteristics (see Chapter 1). Critics such as Gerard and Hoyt (1974; see also Berkowitz, 1994; Yamagishi, Jin & Kiyonari, 1999) point out that participants are likely to be aware that the experimenters are dividing them into groups with the clear expectation that this will affect their behaviour. They argue that participants are likely to infer that they are expected to behave in a discriminatory way, given that groups are stereotypically expected to be competitive along 'us' and 'them' lines (rather like the 'group' heuristic below). The argument goes that participants are merely doing what they believe to be expected of them. Hertel and Kerr (2001) obtained experimental evidence for this suggestion, finding that participants primed with 'loyalty' were significantly more biased in a minimal group allocation study than those primed with 'equality' (for different results, see Billig, 1973).

On the other hand, studies have shown that categorization in minimal groups causes people to exhibit apparently automatic forms of intergroup favouritism that they find difficult, if not impossible, to control. For example, Ashburn-Nardo, Voils and Monteith (2001) demonstrated ethnocentrism following a minimal group manipulation in the Implicit Association Test – reaction times revealed that they associated negative words more readily with the outgroup and positive words with the ingroup. Performance on a task like this is less likely to be affected by demand characteristics than the explicit assignment of resources to ingroup versus outgroup members. A neuroscientific study by Gamond, Vilarem, Safra, Conty and Grèzes (2017) showed that assignment to minimal groups is enough to bias the processing of facial emotions within 30–100 milliseconds of seeing a face. Participants showed different event-related potential and fMRI responses to expected group emotions (angry outgroup faces, happy ingroup faces) than to unexpected emotions (happy outgroup faces, angry ingroup faces).

4 *The group heuristic: they will scratch my back, so I am scratching theirs*

Yamagishi and colleagues (Foddy, Platow & Yamagishi, 2009; Karp, Jin, Yamagishi & Shinotsuka, 1993; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000; Yamagishi et al., 2005) proposed an alternative to the social identity explanation of ingroup favouritism in the allocation of resources. In this 'group heuristic' account, participants' allocation of resources to ingroup members simply reflects their intuitive understanding of how groups work – not necessarily the desire to enhance their social identity. As we have noted, cooperation within groups and competition between groups is a common feature of human life, so much so that it would be surprising if people did not acquire some intuitive appreciation that people are generally helpful and fair within group boundaries, and relatively cutthroat across them. Further, human beings have lived in this way throughout most of their evolutionary history, so it is possible that they are biologically prepared to expect intragroup cooperation and intergroup competition (Cosmides, 1989; Cosmides & Tooby, 1992). Thus, people may give more to ingroup than to outgroup members because they have a generalized expectation that this is how people behave.

This interpretation was tested in a study by Karp et al. (1993). In the original study by Tajfel et al. (1971), participants were told that the people to whom they allocated resources would not be given an opportunity to reciprocate. However, they were led to believe that they would receive allocations from *other* ingroup and outgroup members. Karp et al. (1993) reasoned that, based on the group heuristic, participants would expect to receive more from ingroup than from outgroup members. Thus, they give more to ingroup members as a way of reciprocating the favourable allocations they expect to receive: a kind of 'thank you in advance'. In support of this idea, when Karp et al. (1993) made it clear to participants that their own reward would not be determined by other participants, ingroup favouritism disappeared: participants gave equally to ingroup and outgroup members. Here, there was no ingroup favouritism to expect and therefore to reciprocate.

If ingroup favouritism is based on a generalized principle of reciprocity, it also ought to disappear when people do not believe that their group identity is known to others. Your fellow group members cannot treat you especially well if they do not know that you belong to their group. Indeed, when participants know others' group identity, but are told that their own group identity is unknown to others, ingroup favouritism disappears (Yamagishi et al., 2005). This alternative model poses a powerful challenge to the traditional interpretation of Tajfel et al.'s (1971) famous study and its many replications. Balliet et al.'s (2014) meta-analysis showed that, indeed, people are much more biased towards their group in situations that allow group members to reciprocate. People are biased even when group members cannot reciprocate, but the effect is about half the size.

One problem for the group heuristic account is that there is currently no direct evidence of the existence of the group heuristic. People behave *as if* they believed that generalized reciprocity is the norm within the ingroup, but there is no other, more direct evidence that they have this belief (Yamagishi et al., 2005).

5 *Realistic conflict or identity? Some concluding notes*

Both realistic group conflict theory and social identity theory can claim to be extensively supported by experiments in the laboratory and the field. Nonetheless, there are important questions about how the results of many of these experiments should be interpreted, and it is probably impossible to tell whether a winner has yet, will ever, or ought to emerge. This is partly because there is a lot of overlap and agreement between these two approaches to intergroup relations. Both theories are strongly social, specifying how intergroup relations are affected by the social contexts in which people find themselves. Both theories are also concerned with the pursuit of groups' material as well as symbolic welfare, even if they emphasize them differently. This is not surprising: after all, the material welfare of a group and the esteem in which it is held are strongly linked. Material wealth is often considered to be a marker of esteem – groups that are doing well for themselves materially tend to be held in high esteem, as we shall see elsewhere (Chapter 14). Conversely, when a group is well regarded, it tends to prosper: its members are unlikely to be discriminated against and ingroup members show greater loyalty to it and a willingness to make sacrifices in its interests (van Vugt and Hart, 2004).

Questions

1. Can you think of real-life examples where groups have engaged in conflicts in which huge sacrifices appear to have been made by each group in a quest to secure a trivial outcome?
2. Sacrificing resources for merely relative superiority – getting less overall to ensure that one gets more than an outgroup – would, on the face of it, seem to be counterproductive. However, is there a possibility that participants are playing 'a long game' – being prepared to pay a short-term price in order to accrue later rewards? What benefits might flow from ensuring the group gets more resources than the outgroup, even if it gets less resources in absolute terms?
3. Yamagishi et al. (2005) wrote that: 'The existence of the group heuristic ... cannot be directly tested' (p. 175). Is this true? Can you briefly outline a way in which it could be tested?
4. Insofar as effects observed from the minimal group paradigm are a product of self-enhancement motives, Falk, Heine and Takemura (2014) questioned the extent to which the effects would be robust across cultures. Specifically, Westerners generally show a tendency to self-enhance more than East Asians (Heine, Lehman, Markus & Kitayama, 1999) and may therefore show less of the effects associated with the minimal group paradigm. In their study, Japanese participants displayed less ingroup bias than North Americans across a variety of measures. Can you think of other ways in which culture might influence ingroup bias?
5. Think of two reasons why you might expect (a) men to be less biased than women, and (b) women to be less biased than men, in allocating more resources to the ingroup. Ideally, think of reasons that are rooted either in nature (evolved differences between men and women) or in nurture (socialization of men and women into different gender roles). Then, make a bet – do you think it is men or women who are more biased? When you've done that, you may wish to consult Balliet, Wu, and De Dreu's (2014) meta-analysis which examined whether over many studies, groups including men are more or less biased. How did the different positions stack up? Once you know the answer, do you think it would have been harder to come up with reasons to expect the 'wrong' answer?

Self-esteem and social identification

Minimal group studies have been inspired by social identity theory and, as we have seen, by and large support one of its key ideas about intergroup relations: they are shaped by the mere categorization of people into ingroups and outgroups – 'us' and 'them'. One of the other key ideas offered by social identity theory is that social categories are so important to us, and to shaping intergroup relations, because they speak to one of our basic human needs: the desire for positive self-esteem (see Chapter 2). If you see your ingroup as different and better than outgroups in valued ways – perhaps 'we' are kinder,

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more intelligent or work harder than 'they' do – then you will feel better about yourself as an individual, since you identify with the group and believe you share its positive qualities (see Chapter 8). Social identity theorists (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Tajfel, 1982) therefore put forward the *self-esteem hypothesis*. According to the first part of the self-esteem hypothesis ('Corrolary 1'), if you discriminate against the outgroup successfully (e.g., by assigning more resources to the ingroup), then your self-esteem will improve (since you have elevated your ingroup at the outgroup's expense). According to the second part of the self-esteem hypothesis ('Corrolary 2'), if your self-esteem is depressed or threatened, you will be motivated to discriminate against outgroups, in the hope that it will make you feel better about yourself.

Studies that have tested the self-esteem hypothesis have produced mixed findings. In their review of research into Corrolary 1 of the self-esteem hypothesis, Rubin and Hewstone (1998; see also Martiny & Rubin, 2016) found that nine studies supported the hypothesis that self-esteem may be boosted by successfully discriminating against groups, while ten studies did not. Importantly, these studies were more likely to show effects of discrimination when collective, rather than personal, self-esteem was measured. Collective self-esteem concerns how good you feel about your group and your place in it (see Chapter 2) – and is not the same thing as the personal self-esteem that social identity theorists originally had in mind. Another set of studies with large samples of New Zealand students found that after discriminating against outgroups (including Australians, South Africans and Asians), participants felt a stronger sense of belonging in their group – and that this was not accompanied by increases in personal self-esteem (Hunter et al., 2017).

Recent studies by Iacoviello, Berent, Frederic and Pereira (2017) do suggest that discriminating against the outgroup can improve personal self-esteem – but not for the same reasons as social identity theorists originally envisaged. In one of their studies, they led some participants from Geneva, Switzerland to believe that they had shown a bias towards their city over Basel, another Swiss city, in response to a public consultation about how many national government resources should be invested to solve traffic problems in various cities. In a control condition, other Genevans were led to believe they had shown no bias. Participants' personal self-esteem increased when they were led to believe that they had been biased towards their city, but

crucially, only when they were also led to believe that other Genevans had indicated that they thought that being biased towards Geneva was the right thing to do, and only if they personally valued conformity – following the norms of a group rather than doing things their own way. Indeed, the opposite effect happened when participants who valued conformity were led to believe that other Genevans did not endorse discrimination against Basel. Under these conditions, participants who thought they had personally discriminated against Basel had *lower* self-esteem.

These results can be understood in the following way. When they put forward the self-esteem hypothesis, social identity theorists argued that discrimination increases self-esteem because it helps people to feel that they *belong to a good group*: by discriminating, they have increased the relative status of their own group at the expense of the outgroup. The research by Iacoviello and colleagues indicates that personal self-esteem, instead, is increased by feeling that *you are a good group member*. By discriminating, you have followed the ingroup's norms, and if conformity to group norms is important to you, this makes you feel better about yourself. This means that discriminating against groups can be good for your self-esteem, but only when group norms favour discrimination, and only when you value conformity to those norms. These conditions are not rare: people may assume that the default norm of most social groups is to favour its members over people from other group, akin to the group heuristic (Yamagishi et al., 2005) we read about earlier. In fact, in early statements of social identity theory, Tajfel (1970) argued just this – that people assume that discrimination is the norm (for some supportive recent research, see Iacoviello & Spears, 2018).

Early research examining Corrolary 2 of the self-esteem hypothesis offered still less support for the hypothesis. Rubin and Hewstone (1998) found that four of the studies they reviewed indicated that people with depressed or threatened self-esteem were more likely to disciminate, but ten were unsupportive. This led them to conclude that there was little evidence for this hypothesis. Some studies suggest that, as with Corrolary 1, the type of self-esteem matters, and that collective self-esteem (again, the esteem in which you hold your group) may be more important than individual self-esteem. Specifically, people are more likely to harbour negative, hostile views towards outgroups when they hold their own group in *high* esteem, and when this favourable view of the ingroup is ambivalent or threatened in some way (Cichocka, 2016; Martiny & Rubin, 2016).

This superficially positive but defensive view of a group's worth has been measured and labelled differently by social psychologists over the years: Adorno et al. (1950) called it *pseudo patriotism*, Kosterman and Feshbach (1989) called it *nationalism* (obviously, in relation to national groups, and distinguished from patriotism), Staub (1997) called it *blind patriotism*, Roccas, Klar and Leviatan (2006) called it *ingroup glorification*, while Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, Eidelson and Jayawickreme (2009) called it *collective narcissism*. Although there may be meaningful differences between these variables, they all refer to a mode of identification with ingroups that includes positive thoughts and feelings, but where those thoughts and feelings are exaggerated or unrealistic, are accompanied by a refusal to acknowledge the ingroup's limitations, by aggressive responses to criticism of the ingroup, and are theoretically likely to be accompanied by efforts to discriminate against outgroups.

There is clear evidence that these forms of identification predict relevant outcomes like unwillingness to forgive outgroups and support for military action against them (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), downplaying the ingroup's moral violations (Roccas et al., 2006), and hostile attitudes towards the outgroup (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka & Bilewicz, 2013). However, there is little research on whether they cause people to *discriminate* against outgroups. Such research is needed, and given that discrimination is reliably related to prejudice (Schütz & Six, 1996), it is likely, in our view, to show that specifically defensive forms of identification with the ingroup lead to discrimination, while other forms of identification do not.

STEREOTYPING, PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION IN DIFFERENT INTERGROUP CONTEXTS

Relations between groups have, historically, taken different forms depending on the nature of the groups involved. For example, slavery has been a feature of race relations, but not relations between people of different age groups. Genocide has featured in relationships between religious as well as racial groups, but not in gender relations. Although the theories we have reviewed thus far in this chapter were not designed with any particular groups in mind, they nonetheless have much to say about the experiences of the many different groups who have confronted grievous forms of prejudice through the ages. But, additional theoretical assumptions are sometimes required to understand the particular forms of prejudice and discrimination that different types of groups have encountered. We now consider relations between gender, age and racial groups as examples.

Gender

It is possible to argue that gender is the most important of all intergroup contexts. All over the world, men and women are constantly interacting. Gender is always apparent, not only by virtue of the physical differences between men and women but also because of the different ways in which they speak, dress and act. The very survival of the species depends on successful cooperation between men and women, but relationships between these two groups are not always cooperative. And as both men and women – but especially women – recognize (Sutton, Douglas, Wilkin et al., 2008), women have generally been at the wrong end of the 'battle of the sexes'. Worldwide, women are socially and economically disadvantaged relative to men on indices such as earnings, career and educational opportunities, freedom of dress and movement, victimization in sexual and domestic violence, and representation in political, business and religious leadership (e.g., Rhode, 1989; World Economic Forum, 2017). Nonetheless, they are generally seen as nicer than men, and are liked more, in a 'women are wonderful' stereotype (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994; see also Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002). This apparent paradox – that women seem to experience less prejudice but more discrimination than men – is possibly the most distinctive feature of gender relations. It also illustrates that prejudice and discrimination do not always go hand in hand.

One reason that relations between gender groups differ from relations between other social groups is that they have been deeply affected by **sexism**. Sexism refers to beliefs about differences between men and women and the roles they perform. Typically, sexism not only includes beliefs about differences in the way men and women think, feel and act, but also includes beliefs about the appropriateness of these differences. Put differently, sexism does not just tell you how the genders differ, it also purports to tell you how they *ought* to differ. Thus, sexism, like, say, right-wing authoritarianism, is an ideology. However, sexism differs from the ideologies we have considered thus far, in that it is often rooted in ancient religious and cultural practices (Harris, 1991; Rhode, 1989; Stockard & Johnson, 1992), and is specific to relationships between genders, even if it is often correlated with other ideologies and social practices that have nothing directly to do with gender (e.g., Pratto et al., 1994). Sexism really seems to matter. In a longitudinal study, Brandt (2011) found that the more people in each of 57 countries endorsed this sexist statement: 'On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do' in 2005, 2006 or 2007, the more social, political and economic gender inequality was apparent in each of those countries in 2009.

Sexism Beliefs about differences between men and women, the roles they perform and beliefs concerning the appropriateness of these differences.

There are different types of sexism, and much has been learned in recent years since the advent of the distinction between hostile and benevolent sexism, first made by Glick and Fiske (1996):

» **Hostile sexism** is a negative view of women characterized by the belief that they pose a threat to men's position.

Hostile sexism Traditionally sexist view of women that is characterized by the belief that they pose a threat to men's position.

Benevolent sexism Apparently positive view of women in which they are seen as necessary for men's happiness, and superior in a number of ways (e.g., morality).

Ambivalent sexism Reconceptualization of sexism to take into account the fact that sexism can include both positive and negative attitudes at the same time.

Social creativity Preserving a positive self-image by identifying and giving weight to dimensions on which they are superior to the high status group.

» **Benevolent sexism** is an apparently positive view of women, in which they are seen as necessary for men's happiness, and, indeed, superior to men in many ways, especially morally (e.g., as more kind and pure).

» **Ambivalent sexism** contains both positive and negative attitudes to women.

Research on ambivalent sexism has shown that the distinction between benevolent and hostile sexism holds across many countries in many parts of the globe. Indeed, Glick et al. (2000) ran a large-scale global survey and found that, across countries, hostile and benevolent sexism were generally positively correlated, but nonetheless emerged as separate variables when factor analyses were performed. In most countries, men endorsed hostile sexism more than women. Across countries, hostile, but not benevolent, sexism predicted negative stereotypes of women, suggesting that these variables are indeed functionally different. However, differences between men and women on benevolent sexism seemed to differ across countries. As shown in Figure 11.8, in countries where gender inequalities are especially strong according to UN figures, women endorsed benevolent sexism more strongly than men (e.g., Cuba, South Africa and Turkey). In countries where these gender inequalities are not so pronounced, men and women endorsed benevolent sexism roughly equally (e.g., Australia and the Netherlands). This finding seems to support a key prediction of social identity theory – where status differences between genders are marked and stable, members of low status groups will engage in **social creativity** – that is, preserving a positive self-image by identifying and giving weight to dimensions on which they are superior to the high status group (Jetten & Spears, 2003; Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994). So, for example, whilst women may not be able to see themselves as physically strong as men, it may be satisfying to see themselves as more moral (for related ideas, see Becker & Wright, 2011; Morton, Rabinovich & Postmes, 2012).

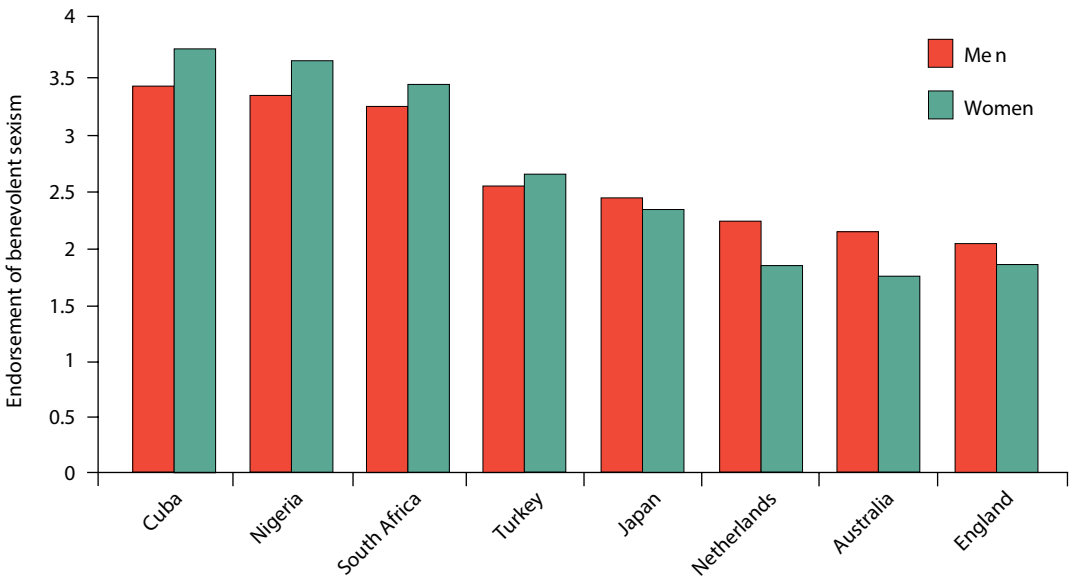

FIGURE 11.8 Endorsement of benevolent sexism in a selection of countries In most countries, men endorsed hostile sexism more than women, but in countries where gender inequalities are especially strong, women endorsed benevolent sexism more strongly than men.

Source: Data from Glick et al. (2000)

As you've been reading this, you may be wondering, what's the problem? Surely benevolent sexism is a quaint, perhaps old-fashioned, but ultimately harmless view of women? Alternatively, you may be thinking, 'it is sexism – so what's 'benevolent' about it?' As Glick

and Fiske (1996) noted: 'some readers might view … *benevolent sexism* as oxymoronic' (p. 491). It is important to note that they were arguing that benevolent sexism is associated with overtly positive responses to women, not that it is good for them. Indeed, for Glick and Fiske (1996; Glick et al., 2000), benevolent sexism tends to justify women's consignment to a subordinate role. For example, if women are kind, pure and sensitive, they are presumably well equipped for nurturing roles and poorly equipped for the kinds of competitive and status-driven roles that are so richly rewarded. Thus, benevolent sexism tends to justify the status quo. As a result, women who endorse this ideology are less likely to try to change it.

A study conducted by Jost and Kay (2005) supports precisely this contention. Moving away from the correlational approach of Glick and his colleagues (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000), Jost and Kay adopted a priming procedure in which participants were experimentally presented with benevolent sexism items from Glick and Fiske's (1996) scale – specifically, items 8, 13, 19 and 22 (see Exploring Further later). Participants either indicated their agreement with each item or rated how ambiguously each item was worded (results showed that it did not matter which). This exposure to benevolent sexism caused women to endorse the status quo, indicating that society is fair, more than women who had been exposed to positive, but non-stereotypical statements about women (e.g., 'Men are less creative than women'). In fact, women exposed to benevolent sexism endorsed the status quo as much as men, whereas they normally endorse it much less than men. Exposure to hostile sexism had no effects on women's endorsement of the status quo. As Jost and Kay (2005) note, their findings suggest that 'when it comes to maintaining inequality, honey is typically more effective than vinegar' (p. 504). For their part, men were unaffected by exposure to any kind of sexism, tending to view the social status quo as being fine as it is (see also Sutton, Douglas, Wilkin et al., 2008).

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FIGURE 11.9 Benevolent sexism The belief that women need to be protected and revered by men is part of the concept of benevolent sexism.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Society routinely exposes people, and young children, to benevolent stereotypes of women. You may be interested to read about the ongoing debate concerning sexism in Disney films. Of course, the female characters in these films are generally pleasant, but they are also – almost without exception – subordinate to male characters. As an exercise, choose a Disney film (e.g., *Cinderella, The Litle Mermaid*) and think about what happens in the film. What was the main female character like? What happened to her? What relationships did she have with the male characters? Knowing what you now know about sexism, are these depictions sexist? What might the consequences of these depictions be? Also, think about older Disney films compared to some that have been released more recently (e.g., *Frozen, Brave* and *Maleficent*). Could Disney film-makers be responding to criticisms about sexism?

Research has revealed several other pitfalls of benevolent sexism for women. Moya, Glick, Exposito, de Lemus and Hart (2007) found that Spanish women who were high in benevolent sexism found it more acceptable for husbands to give orders to their wives, as long as these orders had a protective justification (e.g., 'you should not drive, because it will stress you out'). Hammond and Overall (2013) demonstrated that women high in benevolent sexism were more dissatisfied with their relationships in times of difficulty (e.g., relationship problems, a hurtful partner), arguably because they felt that they were not being cherished or revered. Dardenne, Dumont and Bollier (2007) found that a sample of Belgian women became literally less intelligent immediately after being primed with benevolent sexism. Sutton, Douglas and McClellan (2011) found that benevolent sexists in the UK were more likely to indicate that they would refuse to serve pregnant women alcohol, cheese or even tap water. These results suggested that benevolent sexism may underlie the cultural impulse to restrict the freedoms of pregnant women in ways that may not be warranted by medical evidence. Abrams, Viki, Masser and Bohner (2003) found that individuals (whether men or women) who were higher in benevolent sexism were more likely to blame the victims of acquaintance or 'date' rape. Viki and Abrams (2002) found that benevolent sexists were especially likely to blame married women who were raped while on a date with another man, that is, whose infidelity violated positive, so-called 'benevolent' expectations of women. Rudman and Glick (2001) found that female job candidates who present themselves as highly agentic – ambitious and competent, for example – may suffer a *backlash* as a result of defying the kind, generous, nurturing stereotypes associated with benevolent sexism. As a result, such women tend to be rated as less warm and less likely to work well in a team.

Recently, researchers have demonstrated rather subtle problems associated with both benevolent and hostile sexism. Sibley and Becker (2012) demonstrated that strong ambivalent sexists – that is, people who were high in both benevolent and hostile sexism (about 8–9 per cent of people in their sample) – showed the greatest support for the current gender situation as legitimate and fair, compared to 'univalent' sexists – that is, people who were either strongly hostile or strongly benenevolent sexists, and compared to people low on both types of sexism. Therefore, strong ambivalent attitudes are associated with greater support for a partriarchal status quo. Further, Salomon, Burgess and Bosson (2015) showed that women had negative cardiovascular responses to sexist events of both types. Compared to a control condition, women who received hostile sexist comments from a male researcher experienced heightened cardiovascular reactivity (increases from baseline), and following benevolent sexist comments they displayed impaired cardiovascular recovery (return to baseline after the task).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Below are some example items from Glick and Fiske's (1996) ambivalent sexism inventory. This contains 11 items measuring benevolent sexism, and 11 measuring hostile sexism. The response scale for each item runs from 1 = disagree strongly, to 7 = agree strongly.

Three items measuring benevolent sexism are:

1. **A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.**
2. **In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men. (This item is reverse scored.)**
3. **Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.**

Three items measuring hostile sexism are:

1. **Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.**
2. **Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men. (This item is reverse scored.)**
3. **Women are too easily offended.**

The ambivalent sexism inventory is available online (and is included in an appendix to Glick & Fiske, 1996). Locate it and complete it. Calculate your mean hostile and benevolent sexism score. Remember to reverse score the appropriate items where disagreement indicates higher sexism. In these cases, change a score of 5 to 0, 4 to 1, 3 to 2, 2 to 3, 1 to 4 and 0 to 5. Find means for hostile and benevolent sexism from at least one study. How do your scores compare? What does this say about you? Do you think your results on this test would be different if you had no idea what the test was about?

Source: Glick and Fiske (1996). Reproduced with permission from Peter Glick and Susan Fiske

The sexist tendency to equate women (predominantly, but men too) with their bodies is also apparent in an extensive research literature on **objectification**. Objectification occurs when people are viewed as if their bodies are capable of representing them (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), that is, as if they were their bodies. One manifestation of objectification is 'face-ism': the tendency for women's faces to be less prominent than men's, and their bodies to be more prominent than men's, on TV and in print media like newspapers and magazines (Archer, Iritani, Kimes & Barrios, 1983). Objectification of women changes the way they are evaluated and treated. In a striking example, Heflick and Goldenberg (2009) had participants write about Sarah Palin, John McCain's running mate in the US presidential election of 2008. Participants were asked to describe either the positive and negative traits of 'this person' (in the control condition), or 'this person's appearance' (in the experimental, 'objectification' condition). Participants led to objectify Sarah Palin in this way rated her as less competent and even reported a reduced intention to vote for the McCain/Palin combination in the coming election. This manipulation had a similar effect on ratings of the Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie, although she is not (at least, not yet) running for office – so Heflick and Goldenberg did not ask participants whether they intended to vote for her.

Objectification
The view of people (predominantly women) as being represented by their bodies.

According to objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), objectification not only changes the way women are treated by others, but also changes the way women themselves think, feel and act. Women frequently experience objectification, for example when they are the object of a prolonged gaze by a male observer, or are flattered on the basis of their appearance. They are often exposed to pornographic images in which other women are objectified, or have a partner who views pornography. Such experiences have harmful effects on women, including reductions in cognitive performance. For example, Guizzo and Cadinu

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(2017) found that being photographed by a male (but not female) experimenter caused Italian women's cognitive performance to drop in a laboratory experiment. As predicted by objectification theory, women's cognitive performance dropped in this condition because they experienced less cognitive *flow* – an experience in which people are engrossed in a task and not much aware of themselves or the passing of time. Such experiences can cause women to engage in self-objectification, that is, to monitor their appearance, anticipating that this will be a major factor in how they are seen by others (Calogero, 2004; Holland, Koval, Stratemeyer, Thomson & Haslam, 2017). For example, Tylka and Van Diest (2015) found that previous partners' pornography use negatively predicted women's self-esteem and body appreciation. Other factors predict objectification too. For example, a study of English university students found that when women were primed with benevolent sexism, they became more accepting of the status quo between men and women, which in turn caused them to objectify themselves (Calogero & Jost, 2011).

Although men engage in self-objectification too (e.g., Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005), the cultural tendency to objectify women more often means that women are likely to do it more often, and with more adverse consequences. For example, Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn and Twenge (1998) had women try on either a swimsuit or a sweater. As predicted, wearing the swimsuit elicited higher levels of self-objectification, with the result that women in this experimental condition experienced more shame about their appearance, restrained their eating and did worse on a test of mathematical ability. Self-objectification has also been linked to the severity of striving for thinness among young women in eating disorder clinics (Calogero, Davis & Thompson, 2005). Women are also less likely to engage in efforts to pursue women's rights or gender equality (e.g., by discussing these issues on social media, participating in protests, signing petitions) if they self-objectify in their everyday lives, and after being experimentally caused to self-objectify, by remembering a time that someone sexually objectified them (Calogero, 2013).

Race and ethnicity

Relations between people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds have always had a different nature from gender relations. In part, this is no doubt because racial or ethnic groups are not necessarily in contact with each other, and do not need to cooperate with each

other on the same daily basis as the gender groups. Not only is contact between different racial groups less frequent but it is often more recent, historically speaking. Indeed, much of the early contact between different ethnicities and racial groups arose from exploration, invasion and mass migration, which tends to bring people into the kinds of competition for resources described by realistic group conflict theory (Sherif, 1966). Ethnocentrism in its strongest sense is often a feature at least in the early history of relations between racial and ethnic groups. Those who look, dress and act very differently, who have different ideas about what is morally acceptable and what is disgusting, and who speak an unintelligible language may seem less than fully human (Bastian, Laham, Wilson, Haslam & Koval, 2011; Sumner, 1906).

This *dehumanization* of racial groups that we briefly touched upon in Chapter 9 tends to legitimate even the worst actions against them (e.g., Haslam, 2006, 2015; Haslam & Loughnan, 2014). Thus, relations between racial groups have been characterized by outbursts of organized, large-scale violence seen elsewhere only in some conflicts between religious groups. You are probably familiar with the expressions 'ethnic cleansing', where attempts are made to forcibly move whole peoples from an area, and 'genocide', where attempts are made to eliminate them altogether. Slavery has also been a recurrent feature of relations between racial groups. You may have read H.G. Wells' famous 1898 novel, *The War of the Worlds,* or seen a film adaptation of it. Quite astoundingly, the following appears in the preamble to the book:

> And before we judge them [the Martians] too harshly, we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not only upon animals, such as the vanished Bison and the Dodo, but upon its own inferior races. The Tasmanians, *in spite of their human likeness,* were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit? [emphasis added]

Even in this book, which was meant as a critical parody of British colonialism, we see voiced the quintessentially racist idea that some races are superior to others, and more striking, that some races are not fully human, possessing only a 'human likeness'. And we see documented the fact that these people, seen not fully as people, were exterminated by European settlers – the last 'full-blooded' member of this group died in 1876 (Ryan, 1996).

Historically, racism has been underpinned by the belief that not only are people of different races different, especially in terms of their intelligence, but that these differences are underpinned by genetic differences. For a long time, researchers, especially in Britain and Europe, looked for physiological differences between racial groups, for example in cranial capacity, and even the number of folds in the cortex of the brain (see Gould, 1996). These tests proved inconclusive, but the hold of the eugenics movement, which advocated that differences in intelligence and behaviour between groups (such as the races and the social classes), over the popular imagination remained strong – nowhere more so than in Nazi Germany, where it contributed to the policy of extermination of Jews, Gypsies, people with learning disabilities and some Slavic people.

For much of the 20th century, over much of the world, overtly racist ideas and policies predominated. In some countries, most famously South Africa and many US states, there was a policy of forced racial segregation, where people of colour were excluded from restaurants, public facilities and even residential areas. In other countries, such as Australia, people were excluded from the vote on the basis of race, and mixed-race children were forcibly removed from indigenous families in order to be raised in a white cultural milieu. Such racist policies are at odds with the egalitarianism that these same countries' laws, and even constitutions,

have been based upon. If 'all men are created equal', as stated in the 1776 US Declaration of Independence, then how is race-based slavery and segregation possible? This ambivalence and tension has always been a defining feature of racism (Allport, 1954b; Walker, 2001). One way of resolving the tension is to suppress, inhibit or control racism (Devine, 1989).

Another way to resolve the tension between egalitarianism and racism is to find a way to justify distinctly unegalitarian policies – as did the racist, eugenic notions that some races are inferior to others and therefore worthy of inferior opportunities. As we shall see in Chapter 14, there are a number of social psychological mechanisms available to human beings in order to help them justify behaviours, beliefs and social systems that conflict with their cherished notions of what is right and wrong (e.g., Jost & Banaji, 1994; Lerner, 1980).

One can also resolve the tension between racism and fair-mindedness in the way that one talks. As we saw in Chapter 1, discourse analysis (Billig, 1997; Potter, 1996) is a qualitative research method designed precisely to illuminate how people use talk strategically. Potter and Wetherell (1987) employed this method in their study of racism in the context of relationships between Pakeha (people descended from European settlers) and Maori (the indigenous people) in New Zealand. In the following extracts, a Pakeha interviewee expresses rather egalitarian, anti-racist sentiments:

- [In my class] I had this child who said 'What would happen if you got a whole lot of Maoris living next to you?' and I said to him 'that's a very racist remark and I don't like it'
- I don't like them [racist jokes] I don't find them amusing
- The extended family situation's brilliant, they've got this lovely idea that a child born out of wedlock would have to be the best sort of child because it was obviously born in love ... I think their way with children is wonderful …They've got a lot to show us I think.

But, interviewees did not always express such noble views, as shown in the following extracts:

- The ridiculous thing is that, if you really want to be nasty about it, and go back, um, the Europeans really did take over New Zealand shore, and I mean that Maoris killed off the Morioris beforehand, I mean it wasn't exactly their land to start with, I mean it's a bit ridiculous. I think we bend over backwards a bit too much. [The notion that Maoris killed off an earlier indigenous population of Morioris on mainland New Zealand is a fiction, once taught in New Zealand schools, that seemed to justify European colonialism. In fact, Morioris were based on the distant Chatham Islands.]
- And this is the part that I think is wrong with, a bit wrong with the Maoris as well there, the problems they have, they're not willing, I mean it's a European society here and they've got to learn to get in and work, otherwise it's, I mean you can't tell them to go back to where they came from.

Now, you may be surprised to learn that *all* the extracts presented here – the first few anti-racist ones and the latter two more apparently racist and defensive quotes – were taken from *the same interviewee*, in *the same interview*. This illustrates how inconsistent people will be as they embed potentially racist statements in anti-racist talk, allowing them to express racist views while defusing the charge that they are racist.

Moral credentialing
Demonstrating one's credentials (e.g., to be not prejudiced) often means that people will express more prejudice.

Experimental work has similarly shown that people express more prejudice after **moral credentialing** – that is, having an opportunity to demonstrate that they are not prejudiced. In one study, Monin and Miller (2001) gave Princeton undergraduates a chance to select a candidate for a position in a hypothetical consulting firm. When the standout candidate was either a Black person or a woman, Monin and Miller (2001) reasoned, then participants had been given a chance to 'hire' this person and thus to display their moral credentials, 'proving' that they are not prejudiced. Later, these participants, compared to control participants whose 'star' candidate had not been a minority group member, were *less* likely to hire a fictional Black applicant for a job as a police officer. Having 'proved' themselves to be non-prejudiced,

participants appeared to be more willing to discriminate against another Black candidate. It is notable that participants were more willing to discriminate against Black candidates for the police position after hiring a Black *or* a female candidate. They seemed to feel that hiring any sort of minority candidate is sufficient to show that their later hiring decision is not racist. In a subsequent study, Monin and Miller showed that people were more willing to reject a minority job applicant even when their earlier decision to hire a minority candidate for a different position was unknown to others. Apparently, moral credentialing has this effect because people want to prove to themselves, rather than to other people, that they are not prejudiced (see also Harber, Stafford & Kennedy, 2010; see Blanken, van de Ven & Zeelenberg, 2015 for a review). Further, according to studies by Cascio and Plant (2015), just imagining performing a moral action in the future was enough to increase racial discrimination. This result suggests that you may not even have to actually do anything moral in order to feel better about how moral you are – and thus to feel a little bit more entitled to violate moral standards.

The moral unease about racism illustrated by Monin and Miller's (2001) findings appears to be one of its defining features. It is also entirely consistent with theories of **modern racism** (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998). According to this theory, the growing unacceptability of racism has not caused racism to disappear but has driven it underground. In place of 'old', overt racism, a modern, subtle variant has appeared, in which racism is expressed in forms and in situations that make it appear to be socially acceptable and consistent with the prevailing sense of fair play. For example, instead of advocating that all ethnic migrants should be deported to their countries of origin, modern racists will agree that ethnic migrants *who have committed serious crimes* should be deported. This qualifier deflects the charge that their opinion is racially motivated (Meertens & Pettigrew, 1997).

Modern racism
Subtle and less aggressive form of prejudice based on race.

Ironically, from their review of research, Gaertner and Dovidio (1986) conclude that White people in the USA may find the inner conflict between their egalitarian values and racist impulses to be aversive – causing them to avoid interactions with Black people for fear of experiencing discomfort and unease. This **aversive racism** can be seen as an example of the intergroup anxiety that people experience in their dealings with outgroup members.

Aversive racism
Inner conflict between an egalitarian view and racist impulses can be aversive, such that people avoid contact with specific racial groups.

On the other hand, as seen in spikes in hate speech and hate crime associated with the 2016 Brexit referendum in the UK, many people may be motivated not only to respond without prejudice, but actually to express prejudice. Forscher, Cox, Graetz and Devine (2015) developed a measure of this motivation and found that it predicted a range of outcomes, such as voting for political candidates who advocate oppressive policies, even when

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a measure of their desire to inhibit prejudice was controlled for. In other words, the motive to express prejudice is not exactly the opposite of the motive to inhibit prejudice: people may be motivated to express prejudice and inhibit it, or may lack both motivations, and each motivation may have distinct effects. When society's norms are more tolerant of prejudice, the desire to express prejudice becomes increasingly important and apparent.

TIME TO REFLECT

Think of some films you have seen that have involved the theme of racism. Have more films dealt with old-fashioned racism than modern racism or vice versa? Why do you think this might be?

Age

Ageism Prejudiced attitudes about a person or group because of their age.

Ageism is a widespread form of prejudice and older people face many forms of negative stereotyping, discrimination and ridicule (Age Concern, 2006; Nelson, 2002). It is an intriguing form of prejudice because the perceiver is bound to become a member of the target group – barring some disaster (Nelson, 2005). This allows it to be self-fulfilling in a unique way: it can negatively affect the ageing process itself, causing the perceiver to be weaker, more infirm and more dependent as they age. Thus, if a perceiver is ageist, they are ultimately more likely to become a prototypical example of their negative view of the elderly. This hypothesis may seem like a long shot, but the evidence in favour of it is surprisingly abundant and compelling. Ageism may be as bad for you as smoking. Combating ageism may not only be a matter of social justice but also public health.

Consider a study by Levy, Zonderman, Slade and Ferrucci (2009). These researchers drew on data from the Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging, which started in 1968 and tracks a large and renewing sample of adults from adulthood into old age. Levy et al. considered only those respondents who were less than 50 years old at baseline, who had not experienced a cardiovascular event (e.g., heart attack or stroke), and who completed a measure of ageist stereotypes as they entered the study. This widely used, reliable and valid measure included items such as 'old people are helpless' (Tuckman & Lorge, 1953). Results were startling in their support for the 'ageism is bad for you' hypothesis. Levy et al. compared the health outcomes of participants who entered the study endorsing ageist stereotypes more than average with those who endorsed them less than average. Fully 25 per cent of the first group, who endorsed ageist stereotypes, turned out to have a cardiovascular event in the subsequent 30 years. In comparison, only 13 per cent of the second group of participants, who did not endorse these stereotypes as strongly, experienced a cardiovascular event. If you are thinking like an experimentalist, you may have been thinking: 'Probably the people who originally endorsed ageist stereotypes of ageing were different, perhaps less educated and less healthy, from those who did not endorse them.' Of course, correlation does not entail causation. But Levy et al. (2009) controlled for these and a host of other factors, including age, body mass index and family history, obtaining the same results (see Figure 11.10).

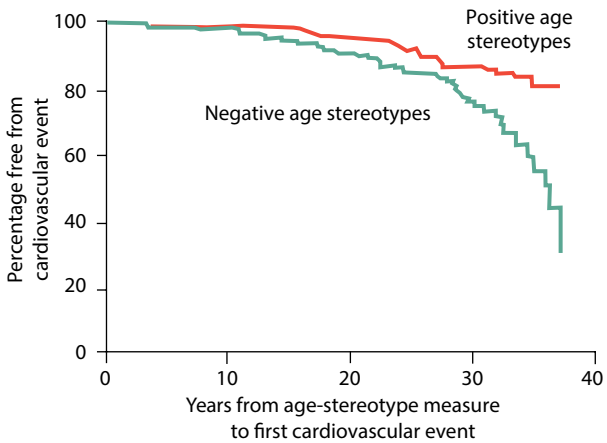

FIGURE 11.10 Association between age stereotypes and time until people experience an initial cardiovascular event The percentage of people who had not experienced a cardiovascular event over time was related to the positive and negative age stereotypes held by the respondents. In particular, participants who held positive age stereotypes were less likely to experience cardiovascular events.

Source: Data from Levy et al. (2009)

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Ageist stereotypes and cardiovascular events

Although Levy et al. (2009) controlled carefully for third causes, and employed a longitudinal design, it is difficult to infer that ageist stereotypes really caused the cardiovascular events because the study was correlational. Can you think of experimental approaches to this problem? In other words, how can you try to affect people's stereotypes about ageing and the aged, in order to observe effects of these stereotypes on health outcomes?

An effective manipulation might not just be a way to test theory; it might also be an extremely helpful intervention that, if widely implemented, could improve the health and wellbeing of thousands, if not millions, of people.

- You will need a control group: what kind of control would be best?
- You will need an experimental group.
- What ethical and scientific issues are raised by attempts to increase participants' ageism; and decrease participants' ageism?
- What are the most effective ways to get stereotypes to change?

Have a go at doing this yourself. You might want to consult Chapter 13 on the reduction and mitigation of prejudice, and Chapter 6 on persuasion techniques. What are the best dependent measures? Is it necessary to measure cardiovascular events, or are you also interested in measures such as blood pressure, exercise behaviours, dietary behaviours and so on? What can your choice of measures tell you about *why* ageism is linked to negative health outcomes?

Human-animal relations

There is an emerging literature on human-animal relations that focuses on the fact that most people claim to like animals but nevertheless still have little problem eating them. It is clear that some animals are viewed as more edible than others – your pet dog or cat, for example, are unlikely to find themselves on your dinner plate, but pigs, sheep, cows and fish are all likely candidates for your daily menu. Why is this the case? Bastian, Loughnan, Haslam and Radke (2012) argue that this has to do with the denial of 'mind' to some animals versus others. That is, people deal with the dissonance they feel about liking animals but still eating them by specifically denying mind to food animals. In three studies, they showed that food animals are seen as having less mental capacity. They also showed that meat eaters are motivated to deny mental capacities of food animals when they are reminded about the link between meat and animal suffering. Finally, they showed that denying that food animals have minds reduces negative affect associated with cognitive dissonance – the aversive perception that our behaviour is contrary to our attitudes (see Chapter 4).

What does this have to do with prejudice? Hodson and Costello (2012; see also Costello & Hodson, 2014; Dhont, Hodson, Costello & MacInnis, 2014) argue that attitudes towards non-human animals can have a human cost – specifically, Costello and Hodson (2014) found that the extent to which children perceive a divide between humans and animals is associated with the extent to which they display racial prejudice. Human-human and human-animal biases may therefore be quite strongly related to each other. Further, Dhont et al. (2014) showed that, as is the case for intergroup relations between humans, attitudes towards animals are predicted by social dominance orientation (SDO), and so intergroup bias and interspecies bias may be underpinned by a similar belief system (see also Dhont, Hodson & Leite, 2016).

In a recent paper, Caviola, Everett and Faber (2019) developed a brief measure of speciesism – prejudice towards animals – with six items such as 'morally, animals always count for less than humans'. Across several studies, they found that scores on this measure are higher among people who score high on SDO (consistent with the work of Dhont and colleagues). They are also correlated with prejudice towards human outgroups (e.g., racism, sexism and homophobia). Participants high on speciesism were less likely to donate time and money to animal causes, less likely to perceive animals as having minds, less likely to report vegetarian food choices, and, when offered a snack at the end of a study, were more likely to choose the meat option.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Homophobia

Thus far, we have talked about sexism, ageism and racism as specific forms of prejudice, and also emerging research on human-animal relations. Another significant form is prejudice against homosexuals. *Homophobia* has not always been a problem in society. Indeed, the Romans were tolerant of different sexual orientations and other civilizations and cultures have been permissive of nonheterosexual orientations over the years. However, few would disagree that prejudice against homosexuals is pervasive in many societies today – one reason perhaps being the rise of Christianity and the development of different norms regarding sexual behaviour. It is also interesting to note that it was as late as 1973 that the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder from its listing.

Of course, attitudes have generally become more positive over the years and significant reforms have been made since 2000. For example, same-sex marriage is now legal in many countries (26 at the time of writing).

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Gay marriage is also legal in all US states and legal protections exist for gay couples in many other countries. However, significant anti-gay sentiments still exist and are sometimes displayed even by some gay people, in a phenomenon known as internalized prejudice (Hoffarth & Jost, 2017). It is important to consider some of the antecedents and consequences of anti-gay prejudice.

Questions

1. Anti-gay prejudice is associated with strong Christian attitudes (e.g., Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993) and active participation in organized religion (Hoffarth, Hodson & Molnar, 2018). What other variables do you think anti-gay prejudice would be correlated with?
2. What impact do you think the AIDS virus has had on attitudes towards gay men?
3. Take some time to search the literature on homophobia. Is anti-gay prejudice against same-sex male couples the same as against same-sex female couples? What are the similarities and differences?
4. List some of the consequences of anti-gay prejudice. How are they similar or different to racism, ageism and sexism?

VICIOUS CYCLES IN INTERGROUP RELATIONS

In Chapter 12, we will deal at length with how relations between groups can be improved, reducing unwanted phenomena such as prejudice, discrimination and intergroup conflict. We think it is useful to close this chapter by considering why these phenomena are so intractable, in order to highlight just how immense and important is the challenge that confronts social psychologists. Of particular interest is something you may have noticed while reading through this chapter: stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and other undesirable intergroup dynamics appear to have a remarkable ability to perpetuate themselves.

Vicious cycles in social cognition

One way stereotypes and prejudice perpetuate themselves is by affecting – we might even say 'hijacking' – the way people process social information. Stereotypes can affect the way we think so that the information we are receiving from the environment *seems* to confirm them, even when it does not, objectively speaking. In Chapter 3, we covered the *correspondence bias* – the tendency to infer that a person who acts a certain way must possess the trait that is associated

with that behaviour (as opposed to seeing the behaviour as a product of the situation, for example). One manifestation of this bias is **spontaneous trait inference**, where people form impressions of others based on observed behaviours. For example, if a person sees another person donating to charity, it is likely that they will spontaneously infer that he or she is kind. They may not be aware why, or how, they are making this connection, and may not intend to do so. The extent to which people make spontaneous trait inferences can depend on stereotypes. Wigboldus, Dijksterhuis and van Knippenberg (2003) showed that when sentences convey stereotype-inconsistent information (e.g., 'the girl hits the saleswoman'), people made much weaker spontaneous trait inferences than when the sentences were consistent with stereotypes. In a subtle but pervasive way, it seems, stereotypes perpetuate themselves by causing us to attribute stereotype-consistent traits to people more than stereotype-inconsistent traits. Dunning and Sherman (1997) went so far as to describe stereotypes as 'inferential prisons' (p. 459), which constrain our perceptions so that we are condemned to experiencing a world in which even completely unwarranted stereotypes seem to be true.

Spontaneous trait inference
People sometimes spontaneously infer others' traits from their behaviour without intending to, or being aware.

Researchers have also uncovered a rather cruel way in which prejudice can gain a kind of self-perpetuating momentum. Uhlmann, Brescoll and Paluck (2006) used the Implicit Association Test (IAT – see Chapter 4) and showed that African Americans were mentally associated (by a sample of White Americans) with oppression (the words used in the IAT were *oppressed, brutalized, dominant* and *powerful*). The more strongly participants associated African Americans with oppression, the more implicit prejudice they showed against this group on another IAT. Uhlmann et al. followed up this correlational study with experiments in which participants viewed pairings of the name of a fictional group, the 'Noffians', with words related to either oppression or privilege. Participants who had learned to associate Noffians with oppression were, as a result, more prejudiced towards them in a later test of implicit prejudice. Even people who appraise the negative experiences of a group in an egalitarian way – seeing them as symptoms of oppression – may, as a result, associate this group with oppression and thus unconsciously devalue them. As the saying goes, mud sticks. In a supreme irony, thinking that mud has been thrown unfairly at a group may foster prejudice towards that group.

Vicious cycles in social emotion

Just as people experience emotions such as fear and anger towards each other, group members can experience emotions towards other groups (Smith, 1993, 1999). According to intergroup emotions theory (Mackie & Smith, 2002), the precise nature of these intergroup emotions will depend on factors such as the relative power and status of the groups. For example, Mackie, Devos and Smith (2000) found that when people perceive their ingroup to be powerful, they are more likely to experience anger towards an outgroup. On the other hand, if they perceive their group to be relatively weak, they are more likely to fear outgroups. People who experience anger rather than fear are more likely to take offensive actions against an outgroup, whereas those who experience fear rather than anger are more likely to attempt to avoid the outgroup. Intergroup emotions have the capacity to dampen intergroup aggression and conflict. For example, Maitner, Mackie and Smith (2007) found that the experience of intergroup guilt about acts of aggression by the ingroup reduced support for further acts of aggression.

However, intergroup emotions also have the capacity to play an important role in irrational cycles of tit-for-tat aggression between groups. In the same studies, Maitner et al. found that the experience of *satisfaction* after acts of aggression by the ingroup led to increased support for further acts of aggression. Further, it does not require great powers of deduction to realize that from the perspective of the victim group, the experience of anger in response to being attacked is likely to motivate retaliatory aggression, especially if the victim group feels powerful enough to strike back (Mackie et al., 2000).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Using Google Scholar, PsycINFO or Web of Science, find papers on 'collective guilt' (social psychological work on this topic began with Doosje, Branscombe, Spears & Manstead, 1998). A quick survey of the abstracts of these papers should give you a feel for the helpful and harmful role this intergroup emotion can play.

Intergroup anxiety model
Model arguing that people expect negative outcomes when they interact with, or anticipate interaction with, outgroups.

Anxiety is one of the most important types of intergroup emotion and also plays a crucial role in perpetuating unhealthy, conflictual relationships between groups. Its role in intergroup relations was highlighted by Stephan and Stephan's (1985) **intergroup anxiety model**. This model was originally formulated with racial or ethnic groups in mind, but could in principle be applied to many other intergroup contexts as well. According to this model, people expect negative outcomes when they interact with, or even anticipate interacting with, outgroup members. Specifically, they may expect:

1. negative psychological consequences, such as feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable
2. negative behavioural consequences, such as being exploited or dominated by outgroup members
3. negative evaluations by outgroup members, for example a White person may fear being seen as racist, a Black person may fear confirming widespread prejudices
4. negative evaluations by ingroup members, for example being seen as disloyal or too friendly to the outgroup.

These negative expectations represent threats, and these threats elicit anxiety. The threats, and hence anxiety, may be exaggerated when people have strongly stereotypic views of the outgroup (Allen, 1996), perceive that the outgroup poses a threat to the ingroup (Stephan et al., 2002), lack knowledge about the outgroup (Britt, Boniecki, Vescio, Biernat & Brown, 1996) or have little previous experience of interaction with its members (Stephan, Diaz-Loving & Duran, 2000).

Anxiety is not 'all bad' and may have some positive effects on intergroup relations. For example, it may cause people to attend closely and with interest to their interaction partner. The fear of being seen as racist may sometimes motivate people to act in a more friendly, positive way (Harber, 1998; Littleford, O'Dougherty Wright & Sayoc-Parial, 2005). However, anxiety is not 'all good' either and can be expected to have several negative effects on the interaction and its downstream consequences. For one thing, even when anxiety may have motivated people to behave in a friendly, positive way, the effort is stressful (Ickes, 1984), reduces their enjoyment of the interaction (Shelton, 2003) and may impair their effectiveness as communicators (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Anxiety may also energize and heighten any negative thoughts and feelings towards the outgroup (Stephan, Stephan & Gudykunst, 1999). Also, as we have seen, when members of minority groups fear confirming negative stereotypes of their group, their task performance tends to suffer (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Another downside of anxiety is that it can interfere with self-control (Easterbrook, 1959; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Alas, as we shall see in Chapter 12, some kind of self-control seems essential in the reduction of prejudice. Thus, the anxiety arising from interactions with outgroup members may make people unable to stop themselves from exhibiting prejudiced responses.

To test this last idea, Amodio (2009) had White American participants talk about race with either a White or a Black interviewer (see also Lambert, Millimet & Slottje, 2003). Later, their saliva was sampled to obtain a measure of cortisol, a hormone associated with anxiety. Also, they completed a measure of race bias known as the *weapon identification task* (Payne, 2001). In

each trial of this task, participants were presented with a Black or White face on a computer screen, then a picture of a gun or a tool. The task was to identify the object. In this task, pairings of Black faces with weapons and White faces with tools are stereotype congruent; pairings of White faces with guns and Black faces with tools are stereotype incongruent. Given a congruent pairing, both automatic race bias and the motivation to control prejudice should lead participants to respond accurately. That is, they should correctly identify guns after seeing them primed with Black faces, and correctly identify tools after White faces. In contrast, incongruent pairings cause controlled processing and automatic race bias to pull participants in opposite directions. For example, an automatic race bias might lead participants to wrongly indicate 'gun' after they have seen the pairing of a Black face with a tool. On the other hand, the motivation to control prejudice will tend to lead them to correctly indicate 'tool'.

Results showed that among participants who had been in the interracial interview, increased levels of cortisol were indeed associated with reduced ability to control race bias. In contrast, cortisol did not affect performance in the weapon identification task by participants who had dealt with a same-race (White) interviewer. This finding supports the predictions of the intergroup anxiety model – anxiety, as indexed by cortisol, would appear to disrupt attempts to control biased responding. On the other hand, self-reported anxiety was not related to race bias. Thus, the physiological, rather than the phenomenological, aspects of intergroup anxiety appear to be most responsible for the disruption of people's ability to control race bias.

TIME TO REFLECT

Do social neuroscience methods such as those used by Amodio (2009) enable researchers to pin down a causal pathway where self-report measures fail? What are some of their weaknesses? For a review of the neuroscience of prejudice and stereotyping, see Amodio (2014).

Vicious cycles in social behaviour

Stereotypes need not be false. As you have been reading about stereotypes, prejudice and so on, it may have occurred to you that many stereotypes contain at least a kernel of truth. Indeed, research shows that they do. For example, the 'women are wonderful' stereotype may overstate the case, but studies do show that, on average, and in many (but not all) situations, women are somewhat more conscientious, less egocentric and more nurturing (e.g., Andreoni & Vesterlund, 2001; Feingold, 1994; Hoffman, 1977). These findings are not necessarily comfortable to contemplate. But, putting aside our political preferences, it is of vital importance for any scientist to be honest, with others and with themselves, about what the data show. Equally, it is important to examine *why* stereotypes sometimes contain a kernel of truth. Do gender or racial groups sometimes behave differently because of innate biological differences? Or do political and social psychological factors contribute to these differences (Campbell, 1967)?

This is where the self-perpetuating properties of stereotypes are so important. Stereotypes have the power to change people's behaviour in ways that seem to verify the stereotypes. One of the most powerful, striking and cruelly poetic cases of this power has been uncovered by research on the **stereotype threat** phenomenon (Steele, 1997). Ironically, when people's performance is being tested, and they belong to a group that is stereotypically not expected to do well, they become anxious that they may confirm the stereotype. This anxiety interferes with their performance – causing them to fall precisely into the trap that they were so anxious to avoid. Although it is not only the case that minority groups suffer the consequences of negative group stereotypes (see the Applying Social Psychology feature at the end of this chapter), this tends to be the predominant pattern in the literature. Thus, girls do worse in maths tests when they are made

Stereotype threat Fear of being judged in terms of a stereotype and negatively fulfilling the stereotype. Stereotype threat leads to poorer performance on a task.

FANCY

FIGURE 11.11 Will this girl pass her maths test? If this girl is told that boys are better at maths than girls, how well will she do on a maths test? The concept of stereotype threat suggests that she will perform even worse when made aware of this threatening expectation.

aware of the stereotype that girls are not as good at maths as boys (Keller, 2002; Spencer, Steele & Quinn, 1999; Steele, 1997) (Figure 11.11). Black students do worse in scholastic aptitude and IQ tests when they are made aware of their supposed academic inferiority (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Older adults' cognitive performance declines when reminded of ageist stereotypes (Abrams, Eller & Bryant, 2006), disabled people who report high levels of stereotype threat are less likely to be employed (Silverman & Cohen, 2014) and the scholastic aptitude of students from poorer backgrounds declines when they are reminded of their socioeconomic background (Croizet & Claire, 1998).

It is important to note that stereotype threat effects are not statistically significant in every published study (e.g., Finnigan & Corker, 2016). Generally, effects in published stereotype threat studies tend to be rather small, and the effect of publication bias – where significant findings are more likely to be published than non-significant ones – means there is room for doubt that on the whole, stereotype threat is a robust phenomenon (Zigerell, 2017). Most likely, the impact of stereotype threat depends on factors, perhaps including the source of the threat and the group that is stereotyped, that we do not yet fully understand (Ryan & Nguyen, 2017).

Just as stereotypes stand in the way of success for groups that are not expected to do well, they give a boost to groups that *are* expected to succeed. Thus, if individuals are made aware of a negatively stereotyped outgroup, their own test performance is actually enhanced, in a phenomenon that Walton and Cohen (2003) called **stereotype lift**. Further, as we have seen in Chapter 3, racist stereotypes about the alleged hostility of Black people (in the USA) have the potential to become self-fulfilling, because the activation of these stereotypes can cause people to act in a more hostile way, with the result that the people they interact with become more hostile (Bargh, Chen & Burrows, 1996). Further, people are conscious of the 'backlash' that is often experienced by people who buck stereotypical expectations, such as women who act in assertive and fearless ways (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). This consciousness motivates people to conform to expectations, and so appear to confirm the stereotype.

Stereotype lift
The reverse of stereotype threat. Fulfilling a positive stereotype leads to enhanced performance.

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

The Student Project on page 667 by Sarah Gradidge from Anglia Ruskin University explored how the species of an animal ('food' versus 'pet' animal) influences how they are perceived. Sarah also investigated how personalization affects perceptions of animal victims. Her experimental work is relevant to our discussions of speciesism in this chapter, and also victim blaming in Chapter 14.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter we have covered the bases of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. We have considered how these phenomena play out in relations between different groups, such as those differentiated on the basis of gender, race, religion and age. Finally, we have considered some of the vicious cycles in intergroup relations. Specifically, we have learned that:

- Stereotypes are simplified, but widely shared, beliefs about the characteristics of groups and their members. Prejudice is a negative affective reaction to a group. Discrimination is the negative treatment of a person based on their group membership.
- The cognitive miser approach argues that people use stereotypes as shortcuts because they have limited memory resources to deal with everyone as an individual. Also, stereotypes and prejudice may stem from faults in human thought and memory.
- Typically, people have less contact with minorities and outgroups than they do with majorities and their own groups. Because they have fewer opportunities to learn about such groups, this leads to an overestimation of the undesirable behaviours of minority group members. This is called the illusory correlation bias.
- The mere act of categorization can also distort the way people think about members of groups and the groups themselves. Placing objects into categories changes the way they are perceived, such that differences between categories are maximized and differences within categories are minimized.
- However, stereotypes stem not only from human limitations, but also from what people want to think. Dogmatic individuals (those with the tendency to be able to tolerate mutually inconsistent beliefs by isolating them from each other in memory) tend to be more prejudiced. Likewise, people with high personal need for structure (indicating a preference for structure in most situations) and those high in need for cognitive closure (indicating a desire for definitive answers to questions) stereotype more.
- Ideology also plays a part in stereotyping and prejudice. Further, people who possess an authoritarian personality and score high in right-wing authoritarianism tend to be more prejudiced.
- Social dominance orientation (a preference for hierarchy and for one's own group to be dominant) is associated with higher levels of stereotyping.
- Two theories of intergroup relations – social identity theory and realistic group conflict theory – differ from the cognitive, personality and ideological approaches to the study of intergroup relations by focusing on processes that occur at the group level.
- Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination occur in a vast array of intergroup contexts. One example is gender, where attitudes towards women contain ambivalent (hostile and benevolent) stereotypes. Further, women are objectified, or viewed as if their bodies are capable of representing them. Such objectification changes the way that women think, feel and act.
- Another example of an intergroup context is race, where members of different racial groups are often dehumanized, or stripped of their human qualities. Such dehumanization legitimizes negative actions towards racial groups. There are different forms of racism and more traditional (hostile) racism has given way to a more subtle (modern) racism.
- Ageism is a widespread form of prejudice and older people face many forms of negative stereotyping, discrimination and ridicule.
- People's attitudes towards animals (and specifically the animals they eat) are associated with human-human intergroup attitudes.

» Stereotypes may not always be false and may contain a 'kernel of truth'. Such stereotypes are powerful and the process of stereotype threat, awareness of a stereotype, and anxiety about fulfilling the stereotype may lead to impaired performance.

We now know about the factors that contribute to stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. We also know about the consequences of these important social psychological processes of intergroup relations. In Chapter 12, we focus on improving intergroup relations.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. What psychological factors affect whether people eat meat?
2. Review the theory of ambivalent sexism and, referring to research evidence, describe some of the consequences of hostile and benevolent sexism.
3. With reference to social psychological theory and research, explain how racism is resistant to eradication. What do we know about prejudice reduction from social psychology?
4. Review the research to date on stereotype threat and stereotype lift phenomena. What are the consequences of each and when are each more likely to occur?

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Understanding and improving boys' academic achievement

In this chapter we reviewed quite a lot of literature on sexist stereotypes and gender role attitudes, paying particular attention to their negative consequences for women. However, women are by no means alone in being adversely affected by social understandings of gender.

One context in which men and boys appear to be suffering is in educational achievement. There is overwhelming evidence that, globally, girls outperform boys academically. Girls have narrowed, closed and reversed the historical gender gap in academic performance within school settings (e.g., DfES, 2007; Van Houtte, 2004; West, 1999).

One such study was conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2010). Under the auspices of its Programme for International Student Assessment, it assessed the educational outcomes of 15-year-old children in the 34 OECD countries, including the USA, Canada, Australia, the UK, France, Spain, Germany and Italy, as well as 41 partner countries. Although boys outperformed girls in maths by an average of 12 points, girls significantly outperformed boys in reading in every participating country by an average of 39 points, which is the equivalent of an average school year's progress (OECD, 2010). Thus, boys' advantage in maths is considerably smaller than their disadvantage in other core subjects.

Further, in some countries, there is evidence that boys are disadvantaged even in maths and science. For example, throughout elementary, middle and high school in the USA, girls obtain higher grades than boys in all major subjects, including maths and science (AAUW Educational Foundation, 1998; Pomerantz, Altermatt & Saxon, 2002). Similarly, statistics from England's Department for Education (DfE) reveal that girls outperformed boys on reading, writing, maths and science at Key Stage 1 (age 5–7) through to GCSE stage (age 16), where 58.8 per cent of girls achieved five or more A*–C grades (including English and Maths) compared to 51.1 per cent of boys (DfE, 2010a, 2010b).

In addition to obtaining higher grades, research suggests that girls receive more referrals to gifted programmes (Bianco, Harris, Garrison-Wade & Leech, 2011), are more self-disciplined and overall progress better scholastically than boys (Duckworth & Seligman, 2006; Mathews, Morrison & Ponitz, 2009). Girls also go on to outnumber men in university degree programmes. For example, women outnumber men 58:42 in UK universities (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2011), and 57:43 in the USA (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). In contrast, boys represent the majority of referrals to special education services, as well as suspensions and expulsions from school (DfE, 2009, 2011).

How can boys' performance be improved, without negatively impacting on girls' performance? There are many possible solutions to this problem, but let us focus on one that is directly relevant to some of the important social psychological principles we have been discussing in this chapter. In particular, we discussed how stereotypes can be self-fulfilling. Recall that stereotype threat – the anxiety that one's performance will be viewed through the lens of adverse stereotypes – undermines the academic performance of Black people, older adults and children from poorer economic backgrounds. Although these are all relatively disadvantaged, or even stigmatized, groups, stereotype threat can also affect relatively high status groups. This applies when such groups are the target of specific stereotypes suggesting they are inferior at a particular task. For example, White participants underperform in athletics when the task is said to reflect natural athletic ability (Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling & Darley, 1999). Also, men underperform on social sensitivity and affective processing tasks when they are reminded that women outperform them in this domain (Koenig & Eagly, 2005; Leyens, Desert, Croizet & Darcis, 2000).

We saw in the chapter that stereotype threat has been successfully applied to study women and girls' performance in maths and science, which is held by traditional, and probably outdated, stereotypes to be inferior (e.g., Flore & Wicherts, 2015). It has also been applied to boys' academic performance. Hartley and Sutton's (2013) studies of British primary school children showed that at age four, girls thought they were better at school than boys, and by age seven, boys agreed with them. By age seven, children of both genders also believed that adults shared this opinion: boys are the academically inferior gender. When Hartley and Sutton reminded children of this stereotype, boys did worse at reading, writing and maths tests (while girls were unaffected). When they neutralized the stereotype by informing children that boys and girls were expected to do equally as well, boys did better (and again, girls were unaffected). There is some evidence, then, that stereotype threat may help explain why boys do less well at school (for similar results, see Latcsh & Hannover, 2014; Pansu et al., 2016). If stereotype threat does contribute to boys' academic underachievement, how could this inform interventions to boost their performance?

1. Search the literature: has this idea been tested before? How many articles can you find that have examined how stereotype threat can worsen women and girls' academic performance? How many have examined stereotype threat effects on men and boys' academic performance? Is stereotype threat really a new possible explanation of boys' academic underachievement? Can you find studies that reduce or eliminate stereotype threat effects for other groups, and borrow their ideas? Or are there other interventions in this chapter to reduce stereotyping, meta-stereotyping and other forms of intergroup anxiety that you can adapt? Outline your ideas in no more than 300 words, plus references where appropriate.

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources including videos and self-test multiple choice questions to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

Allport, G.W. (1954b). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. An oldie, but a goodie. Sometimes it is really worth going back and reading classic theoretical statements like this. Allport writes beautifully and the freshness of his thinking is still apparent today – and has made a huge mark on practically all of the research we have considered in this chapter.

Brandt, M.J., Reyna, C., Chambers, J.R., Crawford, J.T., & Wetherell, G. (2014). The ideological-conflict hypothesis: Intolerance among both liberals and conservatives. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *23*(1), 27–34. Provocative review – backed up with evidence gathered before and after the publication of the review by these authors – that argues prejudice is not the exclusive preserve of right-wingers, and that much prejudice may be explained by perceived differences in political values.

Brown, R.J. (2010). *Prejudice: Its social psychology* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell. Comprehensive coverage of the topic of prejudice, including the major theoretical approaches and analyses of research developments. Still the most recent single book devoted to prejudice, written by a highly distinguished social psychologist.

Ellemers, N. (2018). Gender stereotypes. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *69*, 275–98. Comprehensive, insightful review of research on gender stereotyping, drawing on an eclectic range of theory and research.

Van den Bos, K. (2018). *Why people radicalize: How unfairness judgments are used to fuel radical beliefs, extremist behaviors, and terrorism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sustained and up-to-date coverage of how and why intergroup relations can go extremely wrong – and violent. It also relates to theories of justice that we shall cover in Chapter 14.

PART

4 APPLYING

12. Improving intergroup relations 494

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CHAPTER 12 IMPROVING INTERGROUP RELATIONS

Improving intergroup relations is a primary concern for social psychologists. In this chapter we consider the major strategies to do so, from changing the way individuals from different groups are treated, intergroup contact, strategies based on categorization, strategies based on values, and media and communication. Finally, we consider political strategies for improving intergroup relations, such as intergroup apologies, reparations, communication and negotiation. By the end of this chapter, you will have a comprehensive knowledge of social psychologists' progress on this important issue.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Tokenism and affirmative action
- Intergroup contact
- Categorization-based approaches
- Values-based approaches
- The media and real-world conflict
- Intergroup apology and forgiveness
- Communication and negotiation
- Collective action

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As we saw in Chapter 11, relations between social groups are fraught with problems. But social groups cannot live in perfect isolation. Trade, invasion, colonization and immigration have always been features of human life that have brought people from different tribal, ethnic and cultural groups together. As decades and centuries have passed, economic, technological and political forces have accelerated this process. Early in 2016, Marseille, France's second city, was predicted to become the first Muslim-majority city in Western Europe within the next 15 years. However, this prediction overlooked the fact that until the territories of modern Spain were recovered by Christian armies, cities such as Cordoba and Granada were inhabited mostly by Muslims. Faced with the history, present realities and future inevitability of diversity, how are we to avoid conflict and inequality between social groups? More positively, how can social groups be encouraged to join forces, to work together to solve common problems, and to capitalize on diversity (Crisp & Meleady, 2012; Crisp & Turner, 2011)? Recent evidence gives cause for optimism: using survey data from over 300,000 participants across 100 countries, Ramos, Bennett, Massey and Hewstone (in press) found that some initial decreases in psychological wellbeing associated with increased religious diversity disappeared over time. Their data suggest that people learn to cope with diversity as they come into contact with new groups and build trust.

In this chapter we consider the major strategies for improving intergroup relations that have been considered by social psychologists:

1. Change the way individuals from different groups are treated. This is the essence of techniques known as tokenism and affirmative action.
2. Increase the extent and manage the nature of contact between individuals from different groups.
3. Change individuals' perceptions of the boundaries between groups and the meaning of group differences. This is the basic idea behind categorization- and cooperation-based approaches.
4. Change the values and ideologies that underpin intergroup relations, so that diversity and tolerance are embraced as positive values, and prejudice is seen as a bad thing.
5. Encourage strategies for reducing intergroup conflict at a political level by the joint action of different groups. This involves truth and reconciliation, intergroup apologies and reparations, negotiations and treaties.
6. Collective action by the disadvantaged groups in society to improve their position. This strategy does not assume that increases in goodwill and cooperation are always required for improvements in intergroup relations, but focuses on the elimination of inequality and disadvantage.

TOKENISM AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The causes of social inequality are often much too old, deep-rooted and large scale for any individual, organization or even government to hope to deal with in one fell swoop. However, it is within everyone's power to make small gestures that are of help to individual members of disadvantaged groups. For example, if you are an employer taking on a new staff member, perhaps you can try to give a job to a minority group member ahead of other, similarly qualified applicants. If you are a teacher, perhaps you can make a special attempt and go out of your way to give more pleasant, less critical feedback to minority group members (Harber, 1998). This process of favouring a member of a minority group over a member of a majority group in isolated episodes is the essence of **tokenism** (see Figure 12.1).

Tokenism
Performing positive actions towards members of minority or disadvantaged groups as a reaction to the discrimination they suffer. Tokenism may be a genuine attempt to counteract prejudice, or an attempt to deflect the charge of prejudice.

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FIGURE 12.1 An example of tokenism? Has the employer 'proved' they are not prejudiced by hiring this woman? How would she feel if she knew she was being hired because of her gender?

On the surface, this may look like a promising attempt to reduce prejudice. After all, a person is consciously going out of their way to provide a positive outcome for someone within a minority group. However, one problem with tokenism is that it can be used, consciously or unconsciously, as a means to disguise one's prejudices. This makes it easier, psychologically, to engage in subsequent acts of discrimination. This point was made clearly in studies of moral credentialing by Monin and Miller (2001) that we highlighted in Chapter 11. People who had 'proved' to themselves, but no one else, that they were not prejudiced (by hiring a Black candidate for a job) were more willing later to discriminate against a different Black or female candidate. If an individual displays a good track record of egalitarianism, it appears that they can establish an unconscious ethical or moral licence that actually increases their likelihood of making less egalitarian decisions later (Figure 12.2).

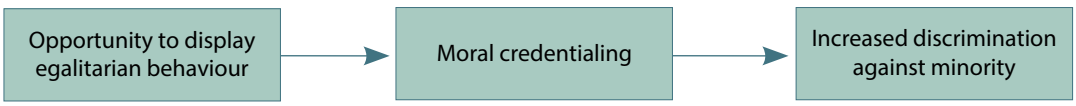

FIGURE 12.2 Moral credentialing A study by Monin and Miller (2001) suggests that people who have been given the opportunity to 'prove' to themselves that they are not prejudiced were more likely to discriminate against minorities in subsequent situations. This moral credentialing occurs even when others do not know about the individual's egalitarian track record.

Tokenism can therefore be motivated purely by the desire for people to prove *to themselves* that they are decent, fair-minded and unprejudiced people. Thus we can see tokenism as an example of the desire to self-enhance, as we explored in more depth in Chapter 2. Kouchaki (2011) demonstrated that the moral credentialing effect occurs even when people have observed a member of their own ingroup being egalitarian, that is, they display a vicarious moral licensing effect. Here, participants who had seen a member of their own ingroup displaying non-prejudiced hiring behaviour were more likely to reject another minority group member (in this case, an African American man) for a job that was stereotypically suited for majority members. For a meta-analytic review of research on this topic, see Blanken, van de Ven and Zeelenberg (2015).

A good deal of research has centred on whether tokenism is ultimately helpful, even to the individuals who directly benefit from it. One downside of tokenism is clear – people are

perceived as less competent by their colleagues if it is known that they were hired as part of an **affirmative action** policy (Heilman, Block & Lucas, 1992). Such policies, which include employment 'quotas', where organizations are required to hire a certain percentage of minority members, are forms of tokenism because they involve granting positive outcomes to minority members. Employment quotas are now illegal in many countries. Such policies may also mean that organizations fail to take more important steps towards equal opportunities. Having 'made the effort', leaders of organizations may feel there is nothing else that needs to be done. Findings also suggest that another downside of affirmative action policies is that the employees suffer reduced self-esteem, motivation and job satisfaction if they perceive they are 'tokens' who have been hired because of their group membership such as their race or gender (Chacko, 1982). Clearly, tokenism can be harmful both to the organization, which may ultimately fail to be progressive, and its employees, who ironically feel worse because of the organization's efforts.

Affirmative action A collective name for policies designed to promote the employment of people from disadvantaged minority groups.

Another harmful face of tokenism may be close to home for you as a student in higher education. Studies have shown that teachers may mark identical work more highly and make fewer critical comments if they believe it is by a Black, as opposed to a White, student (Fajardo, 1985; Harber, 1998). At first glance, this so-called **positive feedback bias** may not look like a big problem; surely positive feedback is nice? However, the problem is that bias can harm minority students' education. Specifically, it can cause students to misdirect their efforts at improvement (Massey, Scott & Dornbusch, 1975), and it can demoralize them by suggesting that praise reflects their race rather than their achievement (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa & Major, 1991). The risk, then, is that students feel patronized and are deprived of the critical feedback that all students need to realize their potential (Yeagar et al., 2014).

Positive feedback bias The process of giving more positive feedback (or less critical feedback) on work believed to have been performed by a minority group member rather than a majority group member.

Like Monin and Miller (2001), Harber, Stafford and Kennedy (2010) were interested in whether this form of tokenism was motivated by teachers' desire to prove to themselves, or to others, that they are not prejudiced. They gave White trainee teachers the opportunity to give feedback on a poorly written essay that had supposedly been authored by either a Black or a White student. The participants then provided feedback to the supposed student. Crucially, participants privately completed one of three versions of the Social Issues Survey as employed by Monin and Miller (2001). In an 'egalitarian boost' condition designed to reinforce pro-minority views, participants were asked to rate their agreement on items such as 'Government offices should be closed on Martin Luther King Day'. An 'egalitarian threat' condition, designed to express opinions that are unfavourable to minorities, included items such as 'It should be legal for businesses to open on Martin Luther King Day'. A neutral condition focused on shopping. As predicted, participants in the Black writer/threat condition rated the essay more favourably, recommended the writer take less time to develop their skills, and provided more favourable comments. Participants in the Black writer/boost condition provided feedback that was no different to feedback provided by participants in the White writer conditions, both of which were unaffected by the threat/boost manipulation (see Figure 12.3). Thus, it seems that the positive feedback bias is probably a reflection of teachers' desire to prove their moral credentials.

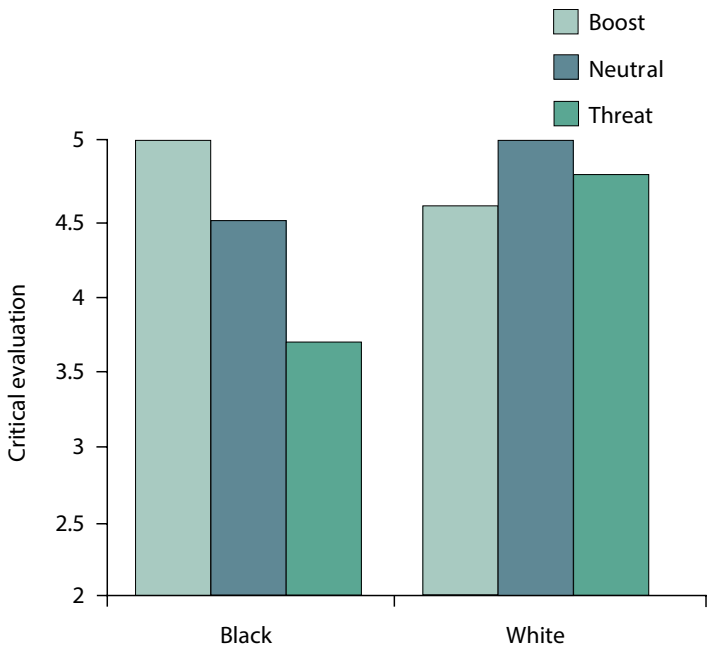

FIGURE 12.3 Positive feedback bias Participants rated work that had supposedly been written by a Black student less critically if their self-image as egalitarian had been threatened. Ratings of work that had supposedly been written by a White student were unaffected. This research demonstrates the positive feedback bias and suggests that it may be a reflection of people's desire to prove their moral credentials.

Source: Data from Harber et al. (2010)

TIME TO REFLECT

A recent review by Simbrunner and Schlegelmilch (2017) suggests that the moral credentialing effect is dependent on culture. Specifically, the effect is stronger in North American samples compared to Western European samples, and occurs in the reverse direction in Southeast Asian samples. In Southeast Asia, it appears that behaving in a moral manner *increases* the likelihood of engaging in moral behaviour in the future. Can you think of reasons for these cultural differences?

In light of these research findings, it is clear why tokenism is so often discussed as a harmful strategy. It is widely considered this way even by the authors of social psychological textbooks. For example, Baron and Byrne (2003) wrote that 'tokenism is one subtle form of discrimination worth preventing' (p. 215). However, tokenism need not be seen as an entirely bad thing. It may sometimes be Machiavellian or deceitful, but, equally, it may sometimes be a noble attempt to counteract inequality and injustice. Whatever the motives for tokenism, it may reduce prejudice by placing competent minority members in prestigious, powerful positions, and so 'proving' that their group membership does not make them incompetent or untrustworthy (Plant et al., 2009: see the Social Psychology in the Real World box on Barack Obama's election). Further, although affirmative action policies can reduce the self-esteem of those who are explicitly told that is why they got their job, it can actually increase the self-esteem of minority group members who are *not* told this. Under these conditions, 'tokens' are free to think that they got where they are because of their own achievements (Unzueta, Guttierez & Ghavami, 2010).

Reverse discrimination A form of tokenism in which people attempt to deflect accusations that they are prejudiced by openly or publicly discriminating in favour of people in minority groups.

Perhaps a more extreme version of tokenism can be seen in what is known as **reverse discrimination**. For people who harbour negative attitudes towards particular minority groups, openly displaying pro-minority behaviour, or public behaviour that favours the minority, is a way to deflect accusations of prejudice. Dutton and Lake (1973) asked 40 White male and female undergraduate students, who had rated themselves as unprejudiced and in favour of equality, to participate in a study ostensibly about involuntary control of autonomic behaviour. Participants in a high-threat condition were led to believe that they had displayed physiological responses indicative of prejudice, while participants in a low-threat condition were led to believe that their response indicated no prejudice. Following the manipulation, participants were approached by either a Black or White confederate who was begging for money. As the researchers predicted, the Black confederate received more money from participants in the high-threat condition than from participants in the low-threat condition. Contributions to the White confederate were unaffected by the threat manipulation. Like other forms of tokenism, it is argued that reverse discrimination can have positive short-term effects but, ultimately, the practice is not good for minority groups. There is no evidence that the practice improves the attitudes of the person displaying the reverse discrimination. It may seem to be egalitarian, but may mask underlying prejudice or ambivalence about groups (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986), and provide people with the moral credentials to feel that they can express prejudice (Monin & Miller, 2001). For social psychologists, it is difficult to separate behaviour that has intentions to conceal underlying negative attitudes from those that are genuinely well intentioned.

EXPLORING FURTHER

How might a social psychologist attempt to separate genuinely egalitarian behaviour from behaviour that is intended to conceal underlying negative attitudes? Consider some empirical methods that might be able to tease these behaviours apart.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Tokenism and the election of Barack Obama

In the Applying Social Psychology exercise at the end of Chapter 10, we considered the possibility that the election in 2008 of Barack Obama, the first Black president of the USA, might be considered a manifestation of the 'glass cliff effect', whereby people from a group who are underrepresented as leaders are given leadership positions precisely when those positions are precarious, that is, likely to lead to failure because of the extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

It is worth pausing to reflect on whether Obama's election was a case of tokenism. A classic sign of tokenism is that the positive outcome granted to a minority group member is cited as disproof of prejudice. Even before Obama was elected, the fact that his election merely looked likely was being cited as evidence that racism was a thing of the past. Win or lose, Obama has proved (if more proof were needed) that although many Blacks are still mired in poverty – a legacy of our racist history – contemporary White racism has been driven to the fringes and is no longer a serious impediment to Black advancement (Taylor, 2008).

Social psychology provides methods and concepts to determine whether Obama's election exhibits some of the hallmarks of tokenism, as demonstrated in a 2009 issue of the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. Here, several papers reported results that seemed to be more consistent with this rather pessimistic view than with the halcyon optimism that surrounded the event in the media. For example, Effron, Cameron and Monin (2009) found that White participants who endorsed Obama were subsequently more likely to discriminate in favour of White people. They explained their results in terms of moral credentialing theory; that is, acts of tokenism display an individual's credentials as a decent, non-prejudiced person, thus making it easier for them to engage in subsequent acts of discrimination without feelings of guilt or shame (Monin & Miller, 2001). Kaiser, Drury, Spalding, Cheryan and O'Brien (2009) found that White Americans' support for egalitarian social policies designed to reduce racial injustice actually declined after Obama's election. This decline was associated with reductions in the perception that racism is a pressing social problem in America. These findings seem to show that, consistent with tokenism, people cite Obama's election as 'proof' that White Americans, individually and collectively, are no longer racist – ironically making them feel more free to engage in discrimination and less obliged to support measures to counter racism.

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These consequences of Obama's election are disturbing enough, but what about the antecedents or causes of Obama's election? Is it possible to view Obama's election as being, in part, a tactic designed to prove that racism in America is no longer a big deal? Yes, according to Knowles, Lowery and Schaumberg (2009). They found that social dominance orientation – an anti-egalitarian ideology that entails the continuing dominance of White over Black people (see Chapter 11) – made some people more, rather than less, likely to vote for Obama. Which people? Those who thought that Obama's election would 'prove' that racism is no longer a problem in America. This study provides impressive, but perhaps rather depressing, evidence that some people who voted for Obama were engaging in tokenism in its worst sense – an act designed to mask the reality of racism and thus legitimize the ongoing disadvantages experienced by Black people in America.

Nonetheless, Plant et al. (2009) provided some evidence for the benefits of Obama's election to office, even if it can be seen as a case of tokenism. They found that White Americans' levels of unconscious or implicit prejudice and stereotyping of Black people reduced after Obama's election. It is possible to see tokenism as a double-edged sword in terms of its effects on majority attitudes; on one hand, it tends to lead majorities to deny or downplay the existence of prejudice, but on the other, it may actually reduce the prejudice they feel – at least in cases such as Obama where the token is generally seen as competent and likeable.

Another potential benefit of tokenism is that it can inspire minorities to aspire to succeed, believing that success is possible. According to Marx, Ko and Friedman (2009), Black people's performance on academic tests showed a subtle but statistically significant increase after the Obama election result. For Marx et al., the presence of a salient, positive role model can have a

beneficial effect on minority groups. However, their conclusions were challenged by Aronson, Jannone, McGlone and Johnson-Campbell (2009), who conducted an experiment in which no improvement was found in Black people's test performance after they had been reminded of Obama's election (compared to a control group). The jury is still out, therefore, on whether this case of tokenism – if indeed it is tokenism – has the effect of helping disadvantaged people to lift themselves up by their own bootstraps.

Questions

1. What has been the gender, religious and ethnic makeup of leaders of your country? Have there been any 'minority' leaders elected? Do you see any signs of tokenism in the election of your country's leaders?
2. Barack Obama is a highly educated, accomplished and articulate man who had many credentials as a leader. If he was White, there would be no discussion of whether or not he was a token. To what extent is it appropriate to ask whether he is a token? Is this counterproductive, harmful or even offensive?
3. If Hillary Clinton had been elected in 2016, would she have been similarly considered a (gender) token? Can there be more than one token in such a position as US president?
4. Of course, after President Obama served two terms, Donald J. Trump was elected. There is considerable evidence that his electoral success was fuelled by racial resentment, perhaps inspired by the previous election of America's first Black president (Hooghe & Dassoneville, 2018; Lamont, Park, & Ayala-Hurtado, 2017; Tolbert, Redlawsk & Gracey, 2018). What might this say about some of the potential downsides of tokenism?

INTERGROUP CONTACT

We, the authors of this book, are old enough to remember 'the Troubles' – a long period of violence in Northern Ireland – which, with tragic monotony, featured in the evening news while we were growing up. Riots, shootings, bombings and killings took place largely between the nationalist community (who sought the independence of Northern Ireland from the UK and generally envisaged a merger with the Irish Republic, and were largely from the Roman Catholic minority), and the unionist community (who sought for Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK, and were largely from the Protestant majority). The violence also spilled over these group boundaries and involved security forces from the British mainland, and terrorist attacks on English cities including London, Birmingham and Manchester, largely by the Irish Republican Army (IRA). With great political will, the flames of this conflict were doused by a period of negotiations culminating in the 'Good Friday Agreement' of 1998.

Although sporadic violence and a good deal of prejudice and mistrust survive, this extraordinary reduction in violence deserves to be seen as one of the most inspirational examples of intergroup reconciliation in living memory. A striking feature of this peace process is that it was not associated with increasing contact between the nationalist and unionist communities. On the contrary, schools and housing developments became increasingly segregated throughout the Troubles and this process of segregation appears to continue. In some parts of the country, and in Belfast in particular, the communities became starkly divided by so-called 'peace walls' that were designed as a means of defusing sectarian tensions. Most are still standing today (see Figure 12.4). In recent years, 'peace gates' have been opened to allow nationalist and unionist communities to interact more freely and to foster greater links between them, but the barriers set up during the Troubles are taking a while to come down completely.

Does this mean that contact between groups is harmful, and that to resolve conflict, groups should be separated? Certainly, some degree of contact is necessary for groups to engage in

conflict with each other – no matter how much groups may hate each other, the range of harms they can do to each other is limited if they cannot reach each other. Some thinkers have regarded contact between groups as fuel to the flames of hatred, suspicion, fear and resentment (e.g., Baker, 1934). But across hundreds of studies, the evidence suggests that contact between groups tends to douse, rather than fuel, the fires of intergroup conflict (Paluck, Green & Green, 2018; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2008; Ramos et al., in press). Perhaps more accurately, research shows that contact generally has the effect of reducing the *prejudice* that individuals feel towards outgroups. Indeed, contact has become the most studied method for reducing prejudice.

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FIGURE 12.4 Cupar Way peace wall The extensive Cupar Way peace wall divides the Protestant Shankill Road from the Catholic Falls Road area of west Belfast.

When and why does contact work?

Research on when and why contact works was based on a systematic theoretical foundation, since labelled **contact theory**, by Allport (1954b) in his book *The Nature of Prejudice*. (As an aside, contact theory was only one of the foundational insights on prejudice to be published in that book; others included early statements about dehumanization, moral exclusion and the importance of categorization for prejudice. It remains recommended reading for those planning higher study in social psychology.) The basic tenet of contact theory is that bringing members of opposing groups together should improve intergroup relations, and reduce prejudice and discrimination. For Allport, contact between groups could reduce prejudice, especially if four optimal conditions were met:

Contact theory Originally Allport's conception that bringing members of opposing groups together will improve intergroup relations, reduce prejudice and reduce discrimination.

1 Equality of status: the groups must have roughly equal status in the situation. If group members do not meet as equals, there is every chance that the inequality will be exploited by those who find themselves at an advantage and resented by everybody else. Of course, groups often differ in status, as is the case in Northern Ireland where the unionist community is larger and more affluent than the nationalist community, and this inequality can erode the value of a contact situation (Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Foster & Finchilescu, 1986). Thankfully, however, research suggests that the perception of equal status *in the situation* is most important (Cohen, 1982; Riordan & Ruggiero, 1980; Robinson & Preston, 1976). As long as this condition is met, the contact situation can be successful, even if the groups went into the situation with different levels of status (Patchen, 1982; Schofield & Eurich-Fulcer, 2001).

2 Common goals: the people in the situation should be working towards a goal that both groups share. Participation in mixed-race sports teams is a good example – whatever the racial background of the players, they share the goal of victory for their team (Patchen, 1982), with the effect of reducing racial prejudice.

3 Intergroup cooperation: the two groups' pursuit of common goals should be based on cooperation, rather than competition, between their members. Recall, for instance, the peace-making effect of having boys from the Rattlers and the Eagles work together in the Robbers Cave experiment (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood & Sherif [1954]1961) (see Chapter 11).

4 The support of authorities, law or custom: this stamps legitimacy on the contact situation, and establishes that acceptance between groups is the norm. As we shall soon see, perceived social norms appear to have a strong impact on the expression of prejudice (Crandall, Eshleman & O'Brien, 2002). It may be especially important in gaining the positive attitudes that may develop between individuals to generalize beyond the contact situation, and beyond those people who were not personally present in a contact situation – which has been one of the defining challenges in research on contact. The importance of the support of an authority has been shown in field studies of contact interventions in real- life settings, such as the military (Landis, Hope & Day, 1984), a credit card company (Morrison & Herlihy, 1992) and a church (Parker, 1968).

Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) extensive meta-analysis of 515 articles examined the effectiveness of contact in the presence and absence of Allport's (1954b) optimal conditions. The results confirmed that even when the optimal conditions are not all present, contact generally works. Contact reduced prejudice not only between the racial and ethnic groups it was originally designed for. It also reduced prejudice based on age, disability, mental illness and sexual orientation. These effect sizes are not large – contact, as an independent variable, generally explained around 7 per cent of the variance in prejudice, as the dependent variable. But they are in the right direction, and highly statistically significant, when considered across the studies. And in support of Allport's (1954b) contact theory, the effect of contact increased when the four optimal conditions were present. The benefits of these optimal conditions are clearest when they are together as a package. Thus, it would appear that these conditions combine to create the right atmosphere for contact, rather than adding up incrementally, increasing the effectiveness of contact one by one (see also Pettigrew & Hewstone, 2017). So, for example, it may not help to work cooperatively in the pursuit of common goals unless groups do this as equals, with the sanction of authority. Indeed, a recent meta-analysis of 660 samples suggests that contact is more successful in cultural contexts where inequality is low and that it is less successful in more hierarchical, unequal cultures (Kende, Phalet, Van Den Noortgate, Kara & Fischer, 2018).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Take some time to research a specific example in society where contact has been used as a prejudice reduction technique. How did it fulfil the optimal conditions specified in Allport's contact theory? Did contact produce positive outcomes in this example? Relate this to a well-known example of effective contact pioneered by Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Sikes and Snapp (1978). Aronson et al. adapted the optimal principles of contact in a widely used and successful classroom intervention called the 'jigsaw classroom'. In this intervention, teachers bring children from different social groups together to work cooperatively, as equals, towards common goals. Using search terms such as 'jigsaw classroom' and the 'jigsaw technique', find and read educational websites and academic references on this technique. Familiarize yourself with the technique and make sure you understand how it relates to the principles of contact theory.

What if contact is not possible?

There is a serious problem that limits the applicability of contact theory to many cases of prejudice and intergroup conflict. Specifically, it can be difficult and expensive to arrange suitably controlled contact situations. Even if the resources are available, groups may live in separate territories, so that meetings can involve long or dangerous journeys. Prejudice may be too intense, and the wounds of intergroup conflict too fresh and too raw to stage controlled contact between groups (Staub, 1996; Stephan & Stephan, 1984). Therefore, researchers have investigated ways in which people can benefit from the idea of contact, even when they are unable to directly experience it.

One method of benefiting from contact without directly experiencing it is known as the **extended contact effect** (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe & Ropp, 1997). You have extended contact with an outgroup if you know that one of your ingroup friends has good friendships with outgroup members. Wright et al. found that people are less prejudiced if their friends have high-quality contact with an outgroup, even if their own contact with the outgroup is limited. Their findings were replicated in Northern Ireland by Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns and Voci (2004). Thus, Catholics were less prejudiced towards Protestants if they knew that at least one of their Catholic friends was good friends with at least one Protestant. More recently, Paterson, Turner and Conner (2015) found that extended contact with cross-group romantic relationships predicted more positive attitudes towards cross-group dating and positive intergroup attitudes in general. Further, Capozza, Falvo, Trifiletti and Pagani (2014) showed that extended contact improved attitudes towards homosexual people and reduced the tendency for people to dehumanize homosexual people. It seems that being able to include the other in the self (Wright, Aron & Tropp, 2002), or to experience others as themselves, reduces dislike for those others.

Extended contact effect Finding that people are less prejudiced if they are friends with an ingroup member who they know to have good friendships with outgroup members.

Of course, these studies of extended contact were largely correlational. Having friends with people who enjoy excellent contact with an outgroup was associated with lower personal levels of prejudice towards the group. This begs the question, does having extended contact lead to lower prejudice, or does lower prejudice lead to having extended contact? Intuitively, if you have positive attitudes to an outgroup, you are more likely to have friends who are also low in prejudice. However, there is also good experimental evidence for the extended contact hypothesis. For example, Liebkind and McAlister (1999) exposed adolescents to an unknown ingroup member who was good friends with an outgroup member, with the effect of lowering their prejudice relative to a control group of adolescents. The prejudice of British school children towards refugees (Cameron, Rutland, Brown & Douch, 2006) and the disabled (Cameron & Rutland, 2006) was reduced by implementing intervention techniques derived from the extended contact hypothesis, and the number of cross-group friendships has also been found to be increased by interventions based on extended contact principles (Vezzali, Stathi, Giovanni, Capozza & Visintin, 2015). Further, extended contact has been shown to improve attitudes towards people with schizophrenia (West & Turner, 2014; for further research on the effectiveness of extended contact, see also Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Turner, Hewstone, Voci & Vonofakou, 2008).

TIME TO REFLECT

Do you think that demand characteristics could be responsible for these effects? How serious a problem might this be and how can it be countered?

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Another form of indirect contact seems even more ephemeral than the vicarious experience of extended contact. Specifically, some research suggests that prejudice may be reduced, at least temporarily, by imagining a positive episode of contact with an outgroup member (Crisp & Turner, 2009). Imagine, for example, you are on a busy train and you get talking to the person sitting next to you about the novel they are reading. You end up having a conversation ranging over many topics, from where you live, to what your children enjoy doing, sports and films. Time flies and before you know it, your train arrives at your stop. If this person is an outgroup member (e.g., someone of a different race, religion, age group or sexuality), chances are that merely imagining this encounter will make you feel better about their group. This is named the **imagined contact effect**.

Imagined contact effect Merely imagining positive encounters with people of minority groups will make people feel more positive towards that: group.

Turner, Crisp and Lambert (2007) asked young British participants to imagine this kind of contact with older adults, and heterosexual men to imagine (non-sexual) contact with gay men. Compared to controls, participants who imagined contact with these outgroups showed lower levels of intergroup bias. None of the participants in these studies were able to guess the aims of the experiment, which tends to rule out the interpretation that participants were merely responding to demand characteristics. The imagined contact effect has been replicated in several intergroup contexts (see Miles & Crisp, 2014 for a review), and has also been shown to be effective in interventions to improve relationships between school children from different groups (Stathi, Cameron, Hartley & Bradford, 2014; Turner, West & Christie, 2013).

Further, Turner and Crisp (2010) showed that imagining contact with outgroups reduced implicit prejudice, measured on the Implicit Association Test (IAT). Although the IAT is not entirely resistant, it is much harder to fake than answers to straightforward questions about how prejudiced one is. This is another reason, then, to doubt that the effects of imagined contact can be dismissed as a mere demand characteristic (for arguments against other alternative interpretations of the imagined contact effect, see Crisp & Turner, 2009).

Imagined contact has other subtle and intriguing effects. Previous research had shown that older adults are prone to stereotype threat effects on intellectual performance – reminded of negative stereotypes of the elderly, their performance declines (Abrams, Eller & Bryant, 2006). More recent research suggests that if older adults imagine positive contact with younger people, they are subsequently less susceptible to this stereotype threat effect (Abrams et al., 2008). Further, Stathi and Crisp (2008) found that majority or *mestizo* Mexicans who imagined contact with indigenous or Amerindian Mexicans were later more prone to projecting their own positive traits to the outgroup. For example, a participant who sees themselves as entertaining would be more likely to see indigenous Mexicans in the same way, after imagining contact with them. This process of projection is likely to reflect a sense that the outgroup may not, after all, be so very different from oneself (Ames, 2004; Jones, 2004). It is also likely to contribute to a more positive general feeling towards the outgroup, that is, less prejudiced (Brown & Hewstone, 2005). However, research is yet to test whether prejudice is reduced by projection from the self to the outgroup. Further, some research (West, Holmes & Hewstone, 2011) discovered a complicating factor of imagined outgroup contact. Specifically, it revealed that if individuals imagine contact with a threatening or challenging group (e.g., schizophrenics), prejudices can be

heightened. Imagining contact with such a group can amplify pre-existing tensions and negative associations rather than reduce them. This effect can be reduced, however, if participants are asked to integrate positive features into these images.

There has also been some controversy surrounding imagined contact effects. Husnu and Crisp (2010) asked British non-Muslim participants to either imagine interacting with a British Muslim stranger, or to imagine that they were walking outdoors (control conditon). The dependent variable was participants' interest and willingness to interact with British Muslims. Participants in the imagined contact group showed significantly higher contact intentions compared to controls. As part of the Many Labs project that aimed to replicate some classic and contemporary psychological findings (Klein et al., 2014), this study was repeated on 36 samples and the effect observed in Husnu and Crisp's (2010) research was only found four times. That is, the imagined contact finding was only replicated in one-ninth of the Many Labs studies. Klein et al. argued that the original studies therefore markedly overestimated the imagined contact effect. In reply, Crisp, Miles and Husnu (2014; see also Crisp & Birtel, 2014) have argued that the findings by Klein et al. do not provide weak support for replicability, instead arguing that they may even provide stronger support for the existence of imagined contact effect. Controversy aside, research on imagined contact effects remains an active area of enquiry.

Another mode of contact between groups is **virtual intergroup contact** via computer-based communication systems. Unlike imagined contact, this type of contact is 'real' in that members of different groups do have personal contact with each other, but they are not physically present when they do so. There is some evidence to suggest that this type of contact is also effective in improving intergroup attitudes. For example, Tavakoli, Hatami and Thorngate (2010) had a group of Canadian students and a group of Iranian students exchange email messages for a period of seven weeks. Prior to the interaction, Tavakoli et al. measured participants' stereotypes, attitudes and knowledge about the people and culture of the other group. At the end of the seven weeks, these variables were measured again and it was found that although judgements of the similarities between the two cultures remained unchanged, participants' attitudes towards people from the other country became much more favourable. This positive effect may be reduced when the contact is anonymous (Schumann, Klein, Douglas & Hewstone, 2017) – which is a common feature of online communication – but in an age where people spend much of their time communicating online, virtual intergroup contact may prove to be a fruitful avenue for improving intergroup attitudes.

Virtual intergroup contact Indirect contact between members of different groups that do not physically meet but instead interact via computer-based communication systems.

Getty Images/Blend Images/JGI/Tom Grill

How effective is contact overall? A meta-analysis by Lemmer and Wagner (2015) examined the effectiveness of a wide range of direct (i.e., face-to-face) and indirect (i.e., extended or virtual) real-world contact interventions. Overall, Lemmer and Wagner found that contact interventions have been effective in improving intergroup attitudes. Moreover, the changes – for both direct and indirect contact – tend to persist over time, appear to be effective in even the most difficult of intergroup conflicts (e.g., in the Middle East) and also seem to generalize to other outgroups. This meta-analysis provides evidence for the effectiveness of contact as a prejudice reduction technique. Nevertheless, unanswered questions still remain, and we invite you to read the Critical Focus section on contact.

TIME TO REFLECT

As a prejudice reduction technique, imagined contact holds promise and does not appear to be subject to typical demand characteristics. How long-lasting do you think the effects of imagined contact might be? Can you find evidence to support your answer?

CRITICAL FOCUS

Reservations and unanswered questions about contact

It is clear there are many success stories associated with intergroup contact. But a number of important criticisms have been levelled at contact theory, which leaves question marks over its applicability to many settings (e.g., Amir, 1965; Forbes, 1997, 2004; Ford, 1986; Hopkins, Reicher & Levine, 1997). Many of these criticisms were gathered together and eloquently put forward in a review by Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux (2005) and we outline them here.

1 *Are the conditions for contact too many?*

One of Dixon et al.'s (2005) key criticisms follows from the fact that much of theory and research has focused on the ideal conditions for contact (e.g., Brewer & Miller, 1984; Brown & Zagefka, 2005; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Schofield & Eurich-Fulcer, 2001). Of course, this makes sense if we want to use research to inform how to engineer meetings between group members under conditions that can be tightly controlled. But this focus has led to two key problems. First, research and theory led to the identification of so many conditions that, in the colourful words of Stephan (1987), intergroup contact came to resemble 'a bag lady who is so encumbered by excess baggage she can hardly move' (p. 17). In addition to the four originally proposed by Allport (1954b), Dixon et al. (2005) list some other ideal conditions for contact that have been identified by researchers, including, among others:

- Contact should be regular and frequent.
- Contact should occur across a variety of social settings and situations.
- Contact should involve interaction with a counterstereotypic member of another group.
- Contact should be free of anxiety or other negative emotions.
- Contact should involve a balanced ratio of ingroup and outgroup members.

Thus, so many conditions are specified that designing the 'optimal' contact situation can be a fiddly and difficult task, if one wishes to take them all seriously. There is also a suspicion that the growth in the number of supposed conditions for *when* contact works has not been checked because social psychologists have not been able to agree on a simple or parsimonious theory of *why* contact works. If we know exactly what social psychological mechanisms are involved, we presumably do not have to rely on a shopping list of conditions. Instead, we are likely to use our understanding of the processes involved in contact to work out which of a small set of conditions might be needed in a particular setting. As it stands, there are several competing theories and some are rather complex, invoking a range of different emotional and cognitive variables (for some

of the leading examples of theories of contact, see Brown, 1995; Dovidio, Gaertner & Kawakami, 2003; Kenworthy, Turner, Hewstone & Voci, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998).

In defence of the contact literature – and it should be borne in mind that despite their criticisms, Dixon et al. (2005) are explicit that they are 'broadly sympathetic' (p. 697) to it, and regard it as 'one of the most successful ideas in the history of social psychology' (p. 698) – the profusion of conditions for contact has been slowed and even reversed more recently. As we have seen, Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis focused only on Allport's (1954b) four original conditions. Further, their analysis suggested that these conditions are best considered together, as a kind of package, rather than separately. In a second meta-analysis of the literature, Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) found that the effect of contact on prejudice was mediated by two key processes. First, contact between groups increases people's willingness to empathize with outgroup members and take their perspective (e.g., Aberson & Haag, 2007). Second, contact between groups reduces intergroup anxiety, especially anxiety about contact itself (e.g., Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel & Kowai-Bell, 2001; Stephan, Stephan & Gudykunst, 1999). Contact also increases knowledge of the outgroup, which helps to reduce prejudice, but, according to Pettrigrew and Tropp's (2008) meta-analysis, to a lesser extent than the changes in intergroup emotion (anxiety and empathy) that contact brings.

2 *Are the optimal conditions for contact realistic?*

Let us say that researchers are able to whittle down the ideal conditions to a package of four or fewer, and that theorists are able to agree on why contact reduces prejudice. Clearly, this would be progress. However, an important question remains. In the majority of studies in the intergroup literature (with notable exceptions, e.g., Ramos et al., in press), researchers have examined the impact of experimental contact situations that have been carefully engineered to produce a good outcome. However, the vast majority of contact situations occur in the much less controlled conditions of real life, where members of different groups live close together and go to the same places for their work, education and recreation. In these conditions, there is no guarantee that the contact is of good quality – and there is increasing evidence that although negative contact is less frequent than positive contact, it is more potent (Barlow et al., 2012; Meleady, Seger & Vermue, 2017). This requires us to do two things when considering the applicability of experimental findings.

First, we should not automatically generalize to real-life settings from studies of contact in carefully controlled settings, be they in the field or the laboratory. These experiments may be a good model for interventions in classrooms or community halls, which bring people together in a positive and supervised way for a specified period. But they may not be a good model for the everyday contact that happens in our playgrounds, streets and other public spaces. Thus, while we can assume that well-designed, controlled encounters between groups can reduce prejudice, we cannot assume that prejudice will be reduced if people from different groups live, work, study and play in the same places. In general, findings from the contact literature do not automatically justify policies of desegregation in housing or education, although there may be many other grounds for backing such policies (Brewer & Miller, 1984).

Second, we should try to find out how well experiments actually model the contact that happens in naturally occurring situations. Of course, there is always a worry that, in principle, experiments cannot be generalized to real life (as we saw in Chapter 1). But in practice, the extent to which the generalizability of experiments is limited depends on exactly what differences exist between experiments and specific real-life situations, and what effect these differences have on behaviour. Research has cast a good deal of light on specific differences between contact, as it unfolds in many experiments, versus real life. In an observational study, Dixon and Durrheim (2003) watched relations between Black and White people on a beach in post-apartheid South Africa. They found that a mix of races (mostly Black people, with a significant minority of White people and those of other racial backgrounds) used the beach. This desegregation, impossible in the appalling days of apartheid where different areas of beach were reserved for those of a different racial background, clearly constitutes a kind of minimal contact. But how did this contact play out in practice? The essential finding was that direct interaction between the racial groups was rare. Different racial groups tended to cluster together in different areas of the beach. When members of different groups were in close proximity, they tended to construct racially exclusive territories with strategically positioned sun umbrellas. Racial groups also segregated themselves with 'temporal processes of flux and withdrawal' (Dixon et al., 2005, p. 704). For example, if a large number of Black holidaymakers arrived at a beach, White people tended to leave.

Lee (2003) carried out a qualitative study in which Black shoppers were asked about their experience of shopping in predominantly White and Black neighbourhoods in the USA. Again, the lived experience of this kind of contact differed radically from those taking place in carefully

engineered contact situations. Black shoppers reported feeling watched and distrusted (e.g., being watched covertly by store detectives), leading some of them to avoid contact while shopping in White areas or to avoid shopping. Others took care to wear expensive clothes and accessories so as to avoid being stereotyped as poor and potentially criminal because of their race.

Of course, none of this is to say that contact theory is wrong. It has never said that *any* type of contact will reduce prejudice. What it does show, however, is that the lived experience of groups who work, study or play together does not necessarily include actual interaction with outgroup members, in the style of carefully designed contact interventions. Arguably, then, a key challenge for social psychologists is to understand how groups interact with each other when sharing physical spaces and how to improve the quality of that contact. In our view, this means there should be greater dialogue between contact theorists and scientists from other disciplines, including environmental psychologists, who study the impact of physical environments on human behaviour, and political psychologists, who are concerned, among other things, with the effect of the political environment on behaviour (see Chapter 14).

3 *There is more to life than prejudice, and more to intergroup relations than prejudice reduction*

The final criticism is that the vast majority of research on contact has focused on reductions of prejudice, that is, it has sought to improve the attitudes of individual participants to the outgroup (Dixon et al., 2005; Forbes, 1997, 2004). This is an important and desirable outcome, but does not mean that contact improves all aspects of intergroup relations. Increasing contact in everyday life brings opportunities for positive contact, but also new opportunities for acts of intergroup aggression (see Chapter 13), disrespect, suspicion and fear (Amir, 1965). Forbes (1997, 2004), for example, argues that increased contact in everyday life may heighten perceptions of threat. Individuals who are directly in contact with the outgroup may experience reductions in prejudice, but those in the wider community who see more outgroup members around, but are not in contact with them, may feel threatened – the effect being a net increase in threatened and negative feelings across the group overall.

Although Forbes' arguments are yet to be directly tested, there is evidence of another potential downside of contact. Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio and Pratto (2009) found one problem with contact is that, among members of disadvantaged minority groups, it may breed an unrealistic expectation that the majority group will start to treat them in a fair and equal way. Ironically, this unrealistic optimism seems only to emerge after high-quality contact, that is, contact that is perceived as positive or is focused on what groups have in common rather than what makes them different. It is as if minorities think, 'Now that they've met us and seen we're not so different, they'll treat us right'. In the first of the two studies they published, Saguy et al. (2009, Study 1) conducted 35 sessions in which a total of 210 participants were divided into two minimal groups of three members. Each group gave itself a name and wore the same coloured T-shirts as a kind of uniform. One group was placed in an advantaged position over the other, being empowered to decide the rewards the two groups would receive. These rewards were research credits (course credits awarded to students in exchange for participating in studies). Meeting the 'advantaged' group and talking about what they had in common tended to cause the 'disadvantaged' group to be more optimistic about how many credits they would receive from them. However, it did not affect the number of credits they actually got from the advantaged group. Consequently, high-quality contact caused disadvantaged groups to develop unrealistically optimistic expectations about how they would be treated: they imagined they would get more from the advantaged group than they actually got (Figure 12.5).

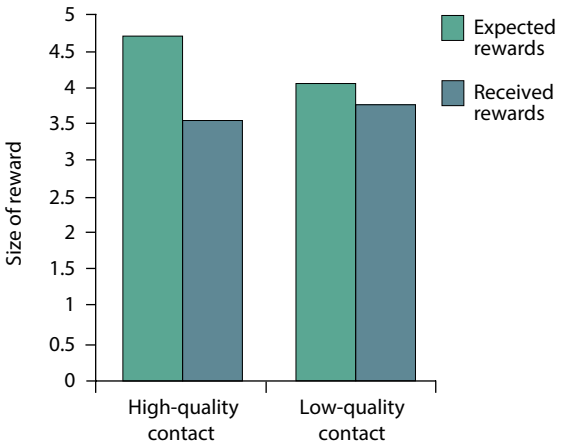


FIGURE 12.5 The ironically widened gap between expected and received rewards after high-quality contact For disadvantaged groups, high-quality contact (vs. low-quality contact) created unrealistic expectations about the distribution of rewards. Participants in a high-quality contact condition believed they would receive more rewards than they actually received from the advantaged group.

Source: Data from Saguy et al. (2009)

Saguy et al. (2009, Study 2) followed this up with a correlational study of Israeli Arabs' perception of how they would be treated by Israeli Jews. They found that Arabs who indicated they had more Jewish friends and acquaintances expressed less prejudice towards Jews. This, of course, is the classical effect of contact. Alongside this finding came greater trust that Jews intend to treat Arabs fairly – similar to the expectation of just treatment that contact fostered in the minimal groups of Saguy et al.'s first study. This expectation of just treatment appeared to lead Arabs who enjoyed positive contact with Jews to express lower support for social changes in Israel that might lead to more equal relations between groups. Unlike the first minimal group study, the second study had no measure of whether Arabs' expectations of just treatment were right or wrong, realistic or unrealistic. However, what the two studies have in common is that groups who are relatively powerless or disadvantaged in a given social setting are led by positive contact to expect better treatment from the powerful or advantaged groups. This expectation can be unrealistic (Study 1), or can undermine the support of the powerless and disadvantaged for policies that would improve their lot (Study 2). For Saguy et al., this is the 'irony of harmony' (p. 114). Yes, contact can reduce prejudice, but at the same time, it may have other effects which might hamper attempts to place intergroup relations on an equal footing. There is a real danger of equating improvements in intergroup relations with reductions in prejudice. They are not the same thing (Tropp & Mallett, 2011). The research literature on contact, with its overwhelming focus on prejudice reduction, should be read with this caveat firmly in mind (Dixon et al., 2005).

Questions

1. Controversy about the pros and cons of contact touches on one of the most topical debates about how intergroup relations should be improved. On one hand, many scholars argue that it is essential to reduce prejudice and promote values such as diversity and tolerance. On the other hand, some scholars argue that the key is to facilitate collective action by disadvantaged groups. Can you find articles published in 2014 and later that discuss this debate?
2. In the Social Psychology in the Real World box in Chapter 4, we saw in Hodson and Busseri's (2012) study how less intelligent people tend to become more prejudiced. One of the reasons this happened is that less intelligent people adopt right-wing or 'conservative' political ideologies that are associated with prejudice. What was the other mediator, though? Use an academic database like Google Scholar to find the abstract, or the article itself.
3. In a theoretical review paper, Crisp and Turner (2011) argue that experiences of diversity, such as intergroup contact, may increase the capacity for creative and complex thought. What do you think this adds to the debate about the contact hypothesis?
4. In an experimental follow-up to Saguy et al.'s (2009) research on the irony of harmony, Becker, Wright, Lubensky and Zhou (2013) found that disadvantaged groups members' intentions to take collective action were reduced by positive contact with advantaged groups – but not if the advantaged group members acknowledged that their advantages were unfair. How might we take this research into account in theories of contact?

The concept of intergroup contact has sparked a great deal of research interest and debate in social psychology. As in the earlier example of Northern Ireland, it is worrying that a lack of contact reflects, and potentially fuels, prejudice. However, it is also important to note that laboratory studies of contact are not about living side by side. What we may think of as 'contact' in everyday life is different from the programmed, structured, legitimized meetings between people that are typical of modern studies of contact. The wider, everyday meaning of contact also requires the input of political scientists, sociologists and human geographers.

CATEGORIZATION–BASED APPROACHES

As we saw in Chapter 11, ever since Allport's (1954b) pioneering work, social psychologists have known that a vital precondition for stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination is the human tendency to place themselves and others into categories. Even a minimal

categorization into 'us' and 'them' appears to be enough to elicit certain forms of stereotyping and prejudice (Ashburn-Nardo, Voils & Monteith, 2001). However, theory and research over the past two decades have suggested that categorization does not necessarily lead to ingroup bias. In fact, social categories can be used as a tool to reduce prejudice. The key insight underlying these developments is that a minimal categorization into 'us' and 'them' is *especially* likely to lead to intergroup bias. If people can be encouraged to categorize in more inclusive and complex ways, there is a good chance that biases can be eliminated.

Decategorization
Group members emphasize individual personal differences rather than group identity.

One option is to go through a process of **decategorization** (or personalization), where personal rather than group identity becomes the focus (Miller & Brewer, 1984). Thus, people regard one another as 'me' and 'you' rather than 'we' and 'they', which is said to reduce intergroup bias by undermining the validity of outgroup stereotypes (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Miller, 2002; Miller, Brewer & Edwards, 1985). This process has been shown to be effective in reducing intergroup conflict in the laboratory. For example, Miller et al. (1985) showed that intergroup conflict that permits more personalized interactions (e.g., being more person focused than task focused) elicits more positive attitudes to outgroup members who are both present and not present.

Common ingroup identity model
Categorization-based approach to prejudice reduction asserting that a common ingroup identity will improve intergroup attitudes.

Recategorization
Group members emphasize a common ingroup.

However, in the real world, this kind of avoidance of group boundaries is not always going to be possible. An alternative categorization-based approach to reducing prejudice is offered by the **common ingroup identity model**, which suggests that if members of rival or opposing groups are encouraged to **recategorize** themselves as members of the same ingroup, intergroup attitudes will improve, or perceived differences may even disappear (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner, Mann, Murrell & Dovidio, 1989). In part, this model emerged from research on the contact hypothesis, which, since Allport (1954b), has emphasized the importance of having common goals and working cooperatively towards them. In their experiments, Gaertner et al. (1989) assigned participants to small work teams of three people. They brought two such teams together and encouraged them to represent themselves as one big team encompassing six people, rather than two separate teams of three. To do this, they used techniques such as manipulating seating arrangements so that teams had to sit together rather than apart, giving them common rather than unique team names and ensuring that participants' success or failure was linked to that of members of the other team of three people, as well as the members of their own team. Under these conditions, which encouraged participants to form a common ingroup identity, bias between the teams was eliminated, or at least reduced. Other research has demonstrated that common ingroup identity may be achieved by increasing the salience of existing common superordinate identities (e.g., schools) or categories (e.g., students) (Gomez, Dovidio, Huici, Gaertner & Cuadrado, 2008), or by introducing factors such as a common goal or fate that is perceived to be shared by the group memberships (Gaertner et al., 1999; Schnabel, Halabi & Noor, 2013; Vezzali, Cadamuro, Versari, Giovannini & Trifiletti, 2015).

Results of field surveys have also supported the common ingroup identity model. Gaertner, Rust, Dovidio, Bachman and Anastasio (1994) asked students at a multiracial school in the USA to circle which of several racial, ethnic and national labels applied to them. Participants who circled inclusive labels that included several racial and ethnic groups (e.g., American) reported lower levels of racial and ethnic prejudice. Once again, a common identity appears to be able to reduce negative feelings between groups. Interestingly, bias was reduced still further when participants did not just indicate a common (or 'superordinate') identity, but also classified themselves into a unique (or 'subordinate') identity, such as Black, White or Asian (Gaertner et al., 1994). Many studies

Getty Images/Caiaimage/Paul Bradbury

have since echoed this finding that simultaneously identifying with both subordinate and superordinate categories leads to the most effective reductions in intergroup bias (e.g., Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Huo, Smith, Tyler & Lind, 1996; Smith & Tyler, 1996). We need not throw away our identification with smaller, more distinct groups. Instead, it is possible, and better, to complement our group identification with higher level identification with superordinate identities.

For the common ingroup identity model, there are two good reasons why this kind of simultaneous identification reduces prejudice. First, it can be seen as a form of **crossed categorization** (Crisp, Walsh & Hewstone, 2006; Hewstone, Islam & Judd, 1993). If you categorize yourself along one dimension (e.g., French), you are likely to perceive fewer differences between yourself and a person of another nationality (e.g., British) if you simultaneously perceive that person and yourself to share membership of another category (e.g., you are both Asian). This is because you will perceive similarities between yourself and that person because of your common racial identity, and not just differences because of your distinctive national identity. The two category accentuation processes (see Chapter 11) are at odds, with the result that overall bias is reduced compared to the situation where you were only aware of your different nationalities. Second, if people retain distinctive as well as superordinate identities while working with people from other groups, they are more likely to be able to show reduced prejudice in other settings. For example, if a French participant is thinking, 'We are no longer Asian or White, but we are all French', they may be less well equipped to show reduced bias in later encounters with French members of racial outgroups. The experience is more likely to generalize if they are aware of racial identities at the same time, so that they are really learning, for example, that 'those White people are not so bad' (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000).

Crossed categorization Categorizing oneself or someone else on more than one dimension at the same time can decrease the perception of differences between groups.

However, the common ingroup identity model is not the only account of why it is beneficial for people to acknowledge both superordinate and subordinate identities. According to the **mutual differentiation model** (Crisp, 2005; Hewstone, 1996; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Montoya & Pittinsky, 2016), people are often very committed to subordinate groups. As social identity theory has made clear, commitment to their social identities is a strong, characteristic feature of human nature and people strive to maintain the positive distinctiveness of their social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Mutual differentiation model Model arguing that people are committed to some subordinate groups and experience 'distinctiveness threat' when a superordinate identity looks as though it may replace distinctive subordinate groups.

Further, relatively small, distinctive groups often satisfy people's need for identity and belonging more completely than large, inclusive groups (Brewer, 1991; Hornsey & Jetten, 2004). Thus, in the mutual differentiation model, people are prone to 'distinctiveness threat' when a superordinate identity looks like it might swallow up and replace more distinctive subordinate groups. This feeling of threat can undermine the gains that might be made by reducing category accentuation effects.

How can we differentiate between the common ingroup identity model and the mutual differentiation model? They both make many of the same predictions. But differentiating between the models is important, because it is crucial that professionals and policy makers are guided by a correct understanding of how people are going to respond to their interventions. According to the mutual differentiation model, attempts to get people to simply identify with superordinate groups, in place of meaningful subordinate groups, can actually backfire, producing increased prejudice. Why? Because the threat of losing a cherished and distinctive identity can make people defensive. People are motivated to reassert the uniqueness and, indeed, the superiority of their group. What better way to do this than to discriminate and express prejudice towards the outgroup? This prediction is not made by the common ingroup identity model, because it does not acknowledge that the loss of subordinate identity can be threatening. Several studies have now produced clear support for this unique prediction of the mutual differentiation model. For example, Hornsey and Hogg (2000) had participants – university students in Queensland, Australia – complete a problem-solving task while different aspects of their identity were made salient. The conditions were:

1. Individual identity salience: participants were told that ordinary individuals could solve problems in ways that trained professionals could not.
2. Superordinate identity salience: participants were told that university students could solve problems in ways that trained professionals could not.
3. Subordinate identity salience: participants were told that the problem solving of humanities students and maths/science students would be compared.
4. Simultaneous identity salience: participants were told that university students could solve problems in ways that trained professionals could not, and that the performance of humanities and maths/science students would be compared.

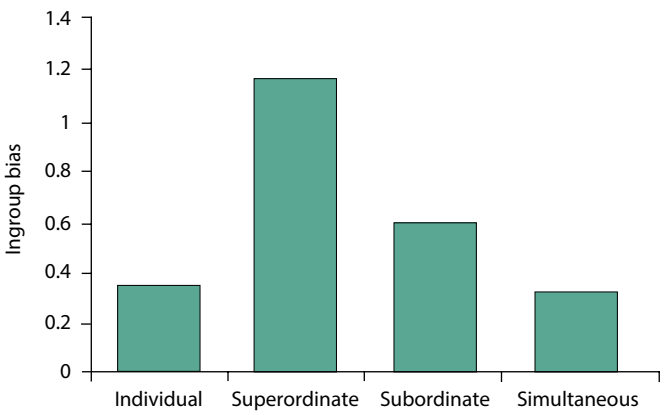


FIGURE 12.6 Different types of identification affect ingroup bias
Ingroup bias was greatest in the superordinate category condition than in the other three conditions (individual, subordinate or simultaneous), suggesting that imposing a superordinate identity without preserving subordinate identities can actually increase prejudice.

Source: Data from Hornsey and Hogg (2000)

After completing the task, participants were told they would solve a similar problem again, but this time in groups. They were asked how much they would like working with members of their own, versus the other, subordinate group (humanities or maths/sciences). This was taken as a measure of ingroup bias. Results revealed that ingroup bias was higher in the superordinate condition than in the other three conditions (see Figure 12.6). Indeed, it appears that prejudice between groups can be made worse by imposing a superordinate identity without preserving the subordinate identities at the same time (see also Kenworthy et al., 2005).

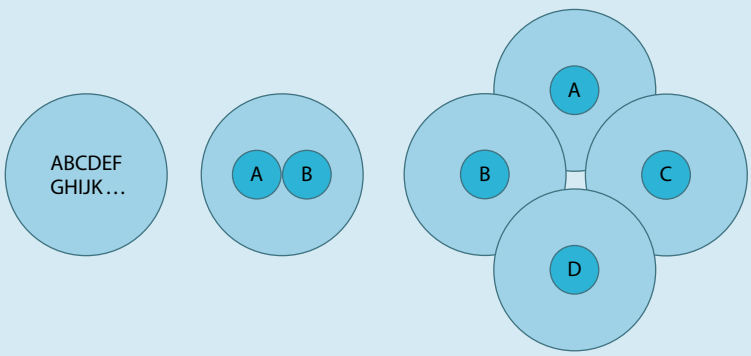
In contexts of sustained periods of conflict, superordinate identities may also have different meanings for different groups. For example, in the context of Northern Ireland, McKeown

(2014) examined the use of the superordinate label 'Northern Irish' for people who identified as 'Northern Irish Catholics', 'Northern Irish Protestants', 'Irish Catholics' and 'British Protestants'. Compared to British Protestants, people who identified as Irish Catholics were less likely to perceive the superordinate identity as inclusive. Both the perception of threat and the strength of identity were important factors too, demonstrating that some subordinate groups may feel less favourable towards overarching 'one size fits all' ways of describing their groups than others.

If you identify strongly with a relatively small, distinctive group, there is a good chance you will feel especially threatened if you perceive that it stands to be replaced with some larger, more inclusive social category. Thus, it is all the more likely that you will react to this threat with increased prejudice towards the other groups with which your group may be merged. Indeed, this is what Crisp and Beck (2005) and Crisp, Stone and Hall (2006) have found. They had British people imagine what life would be like in a United States of Europe, where being British would no longer have any special relevance. They then had participants complete measures of prejudice towards a European outgroup (the French). Participants who had a low (below median) level of identification – that is, a weak sense of being 'British' – responded to the superordinate identification with lower levels of implicit prejudice towards the French. High identifiers (above median) responded with *increased* levels of prejudice, relative to a baseline condition.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Can you identify the different category-based approaches we have discussed from the diagrams below? Try to identify (a) the common ingroup identity model in its simplest sense, (b) crossed categorization, and (c) the mutual differentiation model. Each letter ('A', 'B' and so on) denotes different groups, which are sometimes separated (in a distinct circle) within the greater circle. Which results in the least prejudice and why?



The common ingroup identity model and the mutual differentiation model are concerned with how people think about the relationship between ingroup and outgroup categories. Are they entirely separate with nothing in common? Can the boundaries between them be dismantled? Another promising model of the role of categorization in prejudice, and prejudice reduction, is concerned exclusively with how people think about their own social categories. This model of **social identity complexity** (Roccas & Brewer, 2002) assumes that people have many ingroups (see also Crisp, 2005). Try out the exercise below and you will see what we mean.

Social identity complexity
The extent to which a person's important social identities or group memberships overlap with each other.

EXPLORING FURTHER

We would like you to try this social identity complexity exercise. People belong to any number of social groups; for example, they can classify themselves according to their gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, nationality, interests, occupation and the organizations to which they belong. On a sheet of paper, list four important social categories you belong to.

1 _____ **3** _____
2 _____ **4** _____

Now, think about the overlap between these social categories. In each pairing below, write how much each pair of the categories overlap. Use a scale from 1 to 10. For example, write '1' if you think 'very few' people who belong to the first category in each pair also belong to the second category, 5 if you think 'about half of them do, and 10 if you think all of them do.

Of persons who belong to category 1, how many also belong to category 2? _____
Of persons who belong to category 1, how many also belong to category 3? _____
Of persons who belong to category 1, how many also belong to category 4? _____
Of persons who belong to category 2, how many also belong to category 3? _____
Of persons who belong to category 2, how many also belong to category 4? _____
Of persons who belong to category 3, how many also belong to category 4? _____

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Now, add the six numbers up. Subtract your total from 60, to 'reverse score' it. For example, if your total is 26, then your reverse scored total is 60 – 26, which equals 34. This score is one measure of your social identity complexity, and is calculated very much as in the first study that Roccas and Brewer (2002) reported. The higher your score, the more complex your social identity. This means that you perceive there to be little overlap between your various important social identities. You think of yourself as belonging to a range of different, rather dissimilar, groups. The lower your score, the more simple your social identity. This means that you perceive your important social identities as overlapping to a high extent. Thus, it is as though they are facets of a single social identity. Perhaps have some friends or family do this exercise and compare results.

According to Roccas and Brewer (2002), the more complex your social identity, the less you value personal power, the more you value tolerance and other 'universalist' values, and the more positive you are about outgroups. As you may remember from Chapter 5, Mullen, Calogero and Leader (2007) obtained further support for this idea in their archival studies of intergroup conflict. Tribal groups, and urban gangs, who used more complex (non-overlapping) sets of labels to describe themselves, committed fewer atrocities against other groups. For Roccas and Brewer (2002), complex social identity works by making people less closed-minded and equipping them with greater cognitive flexibility, as a result of experiencing life from multiple perspectives.

Consider the two social categories, A and B in Figure 12.7. One way that an individual can recognize more than one social identity and maintain a single ingroup representation is to define the ingroup at the intersection of multiple group memberships (a). For example, a female lawyer can define her primary social identity in terms of the compound combination of her gender and her profession, which is an identity shared only with other female lawyers. Another way of representing group membership is dominance (b). A female lawyer may see herself overwhelmingly as a lawyer (group A). Although she

recognizes she is a female lawyer (group B within A), she does not feel kinship with other women, only with other lawyers. Another mental model of group membership is compartmentalization (c). A female lawyer may see her gender and professional identity as completely independent, and so will think, feel and act 'as' a woman in some settings, and 'as' a lawyer in others. Finally, she may see her gender and legal identities as meged (d), so will feel a strong sense of commonality and solidarity with women (whether or not they are lawyers) and with lawyers (whether or not they are women); she doesn't see anything special about female lawyers.

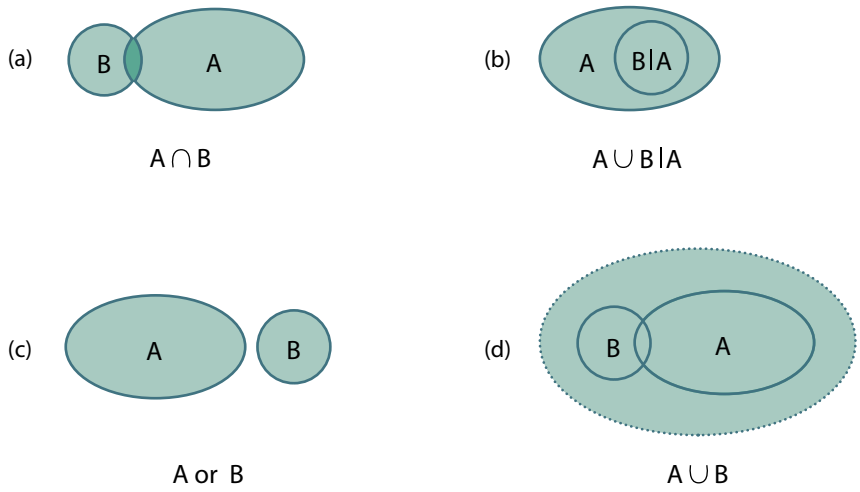

FIGURE 12.7 Social identity complexity

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Further, if your social identities are largely separate, it is likely that threats to one of your identities are going to be easier to cope with, because your entire identity is not under attack. Indeed, the research evidence suggests that this works. For example, results from a telephone interview of US residents showed that individual differences in social identity complexity (perceptions of their national, religious, occupational, political and recreational social identities) were related to their attitudes towards ethnic outgroups and diversity (Brewer & Pierce, 2005). In particular, higher social identity complexity predicted more positive attitudes. Also, Schmid, Hewstone and Ramiah (2013) showed that German people with higher social identity complexity showed less negative intergroup attitudes. This was furthermore related to participants' experience of social diversity: participants from more diverse backgrounds had more complex social identities and were in turn less likely to show ingroup bias. Prati, Crisp, Pratto and Rubini (2016) found that Italians with high social identity complexity were lower in social dominance orientation (Chapter 11), and therefore more supportive of minority rights.

VALUES–BASED APPROACHES

As we have seen, the contact and categorization approaches to improving intergroup relations have had many successes. It is clear they can be applied in classrooms and communities to reduce prejudice between groups. They do not always work and sometimes may even backfire, but research has identified many of the conditions in which this happens and thus it is possible to reduce the risks. However, because the approaches do not always work, it is sensible to look for other approaches to achieving harmony between groups.

Many approaches to understanding how relations between groups may be improved have concerned themselves with values. Values such as tolerance, multiculturalism and egalitarianism may encourage positive attitudes and behaviours towards outgroups and discourage hateful or competitive attitudes and behaviours (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). If these values can be strengthened, or if people can be made mindful of them, there is a good chance they will relate to outgroups in a more positive way. They can also defuse the harmful effect of values such as social dominance, and ideologies such as right-wing authoritarianism, which can contribute to prejudice and conflict, as we saw in Chapter 11. A major strength of this approach is that the effect of values may be felt far beyond prejudice. Values have the potential to provide a common moral language, which means that not just prejudice but any harmful, negative action towards an outgroup is likely to be disapproved of, whereas acts of conciliation and consideration towards outgroups may be highly prized (Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Schwartz, 1994).

To some extent, we can view the 20th century as a kind of giant, naturalistic experiment. Throughout that century, values concerning intergroup relations changed dramatically. As we saw in Chapter 11, at the beginning of the century, many forms of prejudice, including racism, sexism and homophobia, were seldom-questioned norms. Although the principles of equality and freedom were already enshrined in the constitutions of many Western nations, numerous groups were routinely excluded from this noble tradition. However, values were transformed by the traumas and immense social changes of the century. In particular, the new horrors of industrialized genocide were brought to people's attention with ever increasing rapidity by the mass media. This brought to people's living rooms indelible and visceral proof of where irrational hatred and feelings of superiority can lead. Globalization brought different ethnic, cultural and religious groups into close contact and demanded that they learn at least to tolerate each other. The racist doctrines of their early 20th-century predecessors were discredited by biologists and social scientists (e.g., Gould, 1996).

Social scientific terminology like 'prejudice', 'racism' and 'homophobia' entered popular consciousness. To openly discriminate or express blatant prejudice was to risk being fined, fired, jailed, mocked and ostracized. The century saw the end of legally enforced racial segregation and discrimination in many countries, including the USA, South Africa and Australia. Blatant, open forms of prejudice declined dramatically. For example, Dovidio, Brigham, Johnson and Gaertner (1996) conducted a meta-analysis of the literature on White people's stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against Black people in the USA and found that the extent to which they selected derogatory terms to describe Black people (e.g., lazy, ignorant) had significantly decreased since 1933 (Figure 12.8).

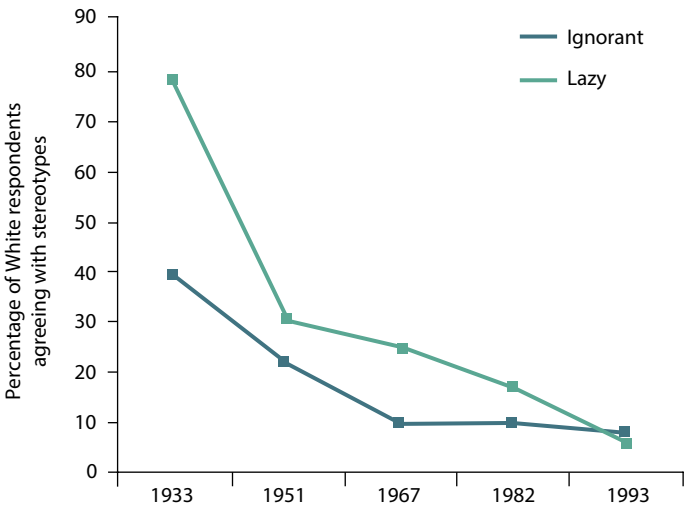

FIGURE 12.8 Decrease in negative stereotypes against Black people in the USA The overt expression of negative stereotypes against Black people in the USA significantly declined in the 60-year period 1933–93.

Source: Data from Dovidio et al. (1996)

Clearly, the changes in values in the last century were accompanied by massive improvements in many aspects of intergroup relations. This should be recognized as a phenomenal victory for human decency and dignity. But it is by no means a complete victory. In many countries,

massive disparities in power, status, health and wealth exist between racial groups, even in the absence of legally enforced disadvantage. War, terrorism and hate crimes are by no means extinguished. If anything, some tensions, such as that between people of Christian and Muslim faiths, seem to have worsened. Further, how can we be sure that reductions in racism, homophobia and the like can be attributed to the new value priorities of tolerance and equality? Theory and evidence are needed to establish what the link is between these two.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is the ideology that diversity should be acknowledged and celebrated (Takaki, 1993; Yinger, 1994). Different groups are seen as having equal value but being able to make unique contributions and offer unique perspectives to society. This ideology envisions a society that is more dynamic, creative and ultimately harmonious as a result of the coexistence of different peoples. It can be contrasted with ideologies that stress the importance of downplaying differences between groups, variously known as **assimilationism**, **integrationism** and **colour blindness**.

Multiculturalism
The ideology that diversity in a society should be acknowledged and celebrated.

Assimilationism/ integrationism/ colour blindness
The idea that diversity in a society should be downplayed and attempts should be made to downplay differences between groups.

Feeling thermometer
A rating scale (resembling a thermometer) designed to measure feelings of 'warmth' or 'coldness' towards people of different groups.

The 'melting pot' ideology of colour blindness has obvious intuitive appeal; indeed, it is widely favoured by teachers and administrators in US schools (e.g., Schofield & Eurich-Fulcer, 2001). Would we all get along better if we did not obsess, or even notice, each other's differences? But a good deal of evidence suggests that multiculturalism is the better policy for reductions in bias. One reason for this is clear after reading the categorization literature – multiculturalism provides a framework that acknowledges differences between groups but also suggests that these groups combine to create a new, superordinate, emergent identity. Thus, it encourages the simultaneous identification with superordinate and subordinate groups, which, as we have seen, tends to be beneficial for intergroup relations (Crisp, 2005; Gaertner et al., 1999; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). Conversely, colour blindness may threaten people's cherished subordinate identities (Crisp et al., 2006; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). Further, when group differences are acknowledged, it is easier for people to notice, and remedy, instances of injustice and disharmony between groups (Banks et al., 2001). Also, the ideological nature of multiculturalism signifies to people that positive attitudes to diversity, to outgroups, are the norm (Crandall et al., 2002).

Richeson and Nussbaum (2004) were able to provide experimental support for the merits of multiculturalism, as compared to colour blindness. They had participants read a one-page statement that endorsed either multiculturalism or colour blindness, and then asked them to write a summary of five key reasons why the ideology they had read about was 'a positive approach to interethnic relations'. Afterwards, participants completed the classic IAT for implicit racism towards Black people, and then rated Black, White and other ethnic groups in America on a **feeling thermometer**. The multiculturalism induction led to declines in all these indices of racial bias (Figure 12.9).

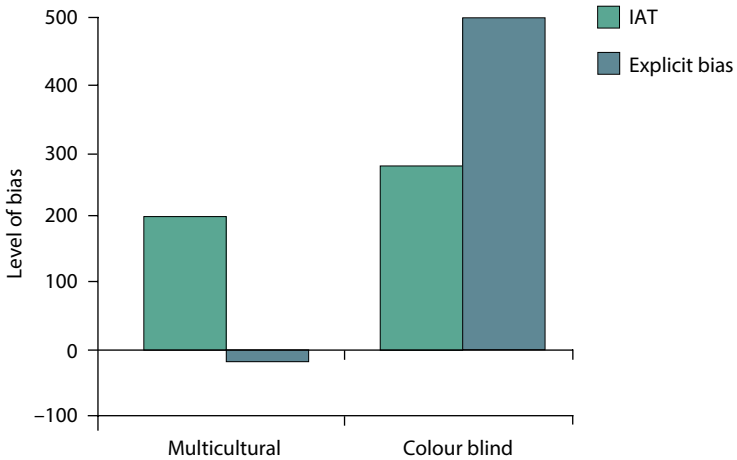

FIGURE 12.9 Multiculturalism, compared to colour blindness, reduces bias People displayed less implicit and explicit intergroup bias in an experimental condition where multiculturalism was emphasized in contrast to a condition where colour blindness was emphasized.

Source: Data from Richeson and Nussbaum (2004)

EXPLORING FURTHER

Richeson and Nussbaum (2004) observed a clear difference between the multicultural and colour blind prime. Can you tell from their results whether the multicultural prime had the effect of reducing prejudice? Why/why not? (Hint: think about the experimental design they used.)

Suppression of prejudice

As we saw in Chapter 11, many forms of prejudice and discrimination, including racism and sexism, have always been at odds with sincerely held values of liberalism and equality. Thus, people in avowedly liberal and democratic countries have experienced a dilemma – on one hand they are prejudiced, but on the other they subscribe to values suggesting that human beings are of equal worth regardless of race, religion, gender or creed. These two opposing pressures have long been recognized by social psychologists. Myrdal (1944), for example, wrote of the 'American dilemma', one of its horns being racism and the other the ideology of opportunity for all. Allport (1954b) claimed that although some White Americans are bigots who are at ease with their prejudices, the majority experience compunction (moral guilt). More recently, as we saw in Chapter 11, people who are squeezed between these opposing forces are prone to modern racism (McConahay, 1986) and automatic prejudice (Devine, 1989). According to these theories, the mounting emphasis throughout the 20th century on values such as 'liberalism, egalitarianism, sympathy for the underdog ... and humanitarian values' (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003, p. 415) has increasingly motivated people to suppress prejudice and the impulse to discriminate. These values have translated into social norms that suggest it is no longer acceptable to express overt prejudice towards many groups. These norms are extremely powerful, as some findings suggest.

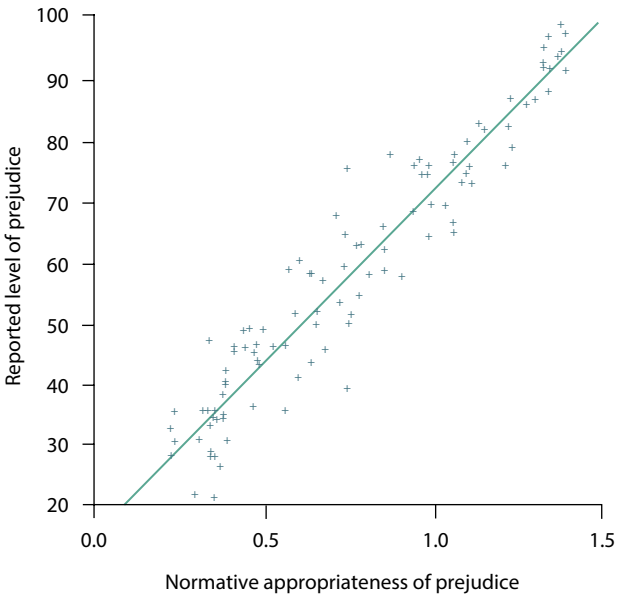

FIGURE 12.10 Correlation between level and appropriateness of prejudice The correlation between the norm of acceptability of prejudice towards various social groups is strongly associated with the prejudice that is expressed.

Source: Crandall et al. (2002). Copyright © 2002 by American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

Crandall et al. (2002) asked 150 US undergraduate students to rate how acceptable prejudice was towards each of 105 groups, according to the 'predominant social norm' (p. 363). Each group earned a mean prejudice acceptability score between 0 and 2, which ranged from 0.047 for blind people and women who stay home to raise kids, to 1.967 for rapists and child molesters. They then asked a separate sample of 121 US undergraduate students to rate how they felt about each of these 105 groups on a feeling thermometer from 0 = 'cold/not positive' to 100 = 'hot/very positive'. This was later reverse scored (e.g., a score of 20 would be translated to 80, and a score of 90 would be translated to 10), so that the higher the score, the more the participants were prejudiced towards each group.

As Figure 12.10 shows, the more participants in the first group perceived prejudice towards each group to be socially acceptable, the more participants in the second group expressed prejudice towards each group.

Indeed, this correlation was extraordinarily high at $r = .96$, just shy of the maximum, perfect correlation of 1.0. For reassurance that this whopping correlation was not a fluke, see Graziano, Bruce, Tobin and Sheese (2007) who found something similar ($r = .94$). To put the correlation obtained by Crandall et al. (2002) into context, the typical correlation between contact and (lower) prejudice is around $r = .27$ (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). It is tempting to say, therefore, that the effect of social norms is nearly four times as large as the effect of contact. However, this is a serious understatement.

To get an idea of how the proportion of the ups and downs in one variable (prejudice) overlap with another variable (contact or perceived social norms), you should square the correlation coefficient to obtain r^2. Squaring .27, we get a little over .07, or 7 per cent of the variance in common between contact and prejudice. Squaring .96, we get .92, or 92 per cent of the variance in common.

In an experiment reported in the same article and inspired by Asch's (1951) famous experiments on conformity, Crandall et al. (2002) had a confederate express prejudice. This had the effect of increasing the prejudice that participants themselves expressed towards the same group. This provides some evidence that norms, be they societal norms or the local norms among small groups of people gathered in a laboratory, genuinely have the power to influence, and do not merely reflect, the prejudices people are willing to express. Norms can motivate people to suppress prejudice in different ways. For example, if you are comfortable with your own prejudices but suppress them because you think others will disapprove, you are extrinsically motivated. On the other hand, if you dislike your prejudices and suppress them for this reason, irrespective of how you are viewed by others, you are intrinsically motivated. People may start out being extrinsically motivated to suppress prejudice, but, over time, internalize anti-prejudice norms and thus become intrinsically motivated (Crandall et al., 2002).

Evidence suggests that the intrinsic motivation to suppress prejudice may be more effective. One reason for this is that intrinsically motivated people experience genuine emotions, especially guilt, when they fail to live up to their own non-prejudiced standards. Plant and Devine (1998) attempted to disentangle the motivation to respond without prejudice by distinguishing between external/social (extrinsic) and internal/personal (intrinsic) motivation. They developed scales to measure both types of motivations to respond without prejudice towards Black people. Intrinsic motivation referred to internalized and personally important non-prejudiced standards, whereas extrinsic motivation referred to the social pressure to conform to non-prejudiced norms. Plant and Devine (1998) found that intrinsic motivation to respond without prejudice was associated with lower racism (self-reported racism scores), whereas extrinsic motivation was related to higher self-reported racism scores. Recent evidence suggests that these motivations may even be related to distinct patterns of neural activity (Mattan, Kubota, Dang & Cloutier, 2016).

In another series of experiments, Monteith (1993) had participants decide whether a hypothetical applicant should get a place to study in law school. The applicant was weak and was duly rejected by all but 11 participants. Half the participants had been told at the outset that the applicant was gay, and were also led to believe they had discriminated against the applicant because of it. The other half had been told the applicant was heterosexual. Participants who were low in homophobia according to tests run before the experiment had thus been tricked into thinking they had violated their own moral standards. Following this, all participants read an essay about stereotyping and prejudice, ostensibly written by Monteith. Pretending she was seeking feedback on her ideas, she asked participants for their thoughts about it. What she was really interested in was whether participants mentioned their own prejudices, and whether they mentioned any discrepancies between their egalitarian principles

and their behaviour. Results showed that after being led to believe they had discriminated against a gay person, low homophobia participants showed increased negative thoughts about themselves and took longer to read the essay on stereotyping and prejudice. They also thought more about themselves and the discrepancies between their ideal standards and their actual behaviour. The awareness manipulation had no significant effect on participants who scored high in homophobia (Figure 12.11).

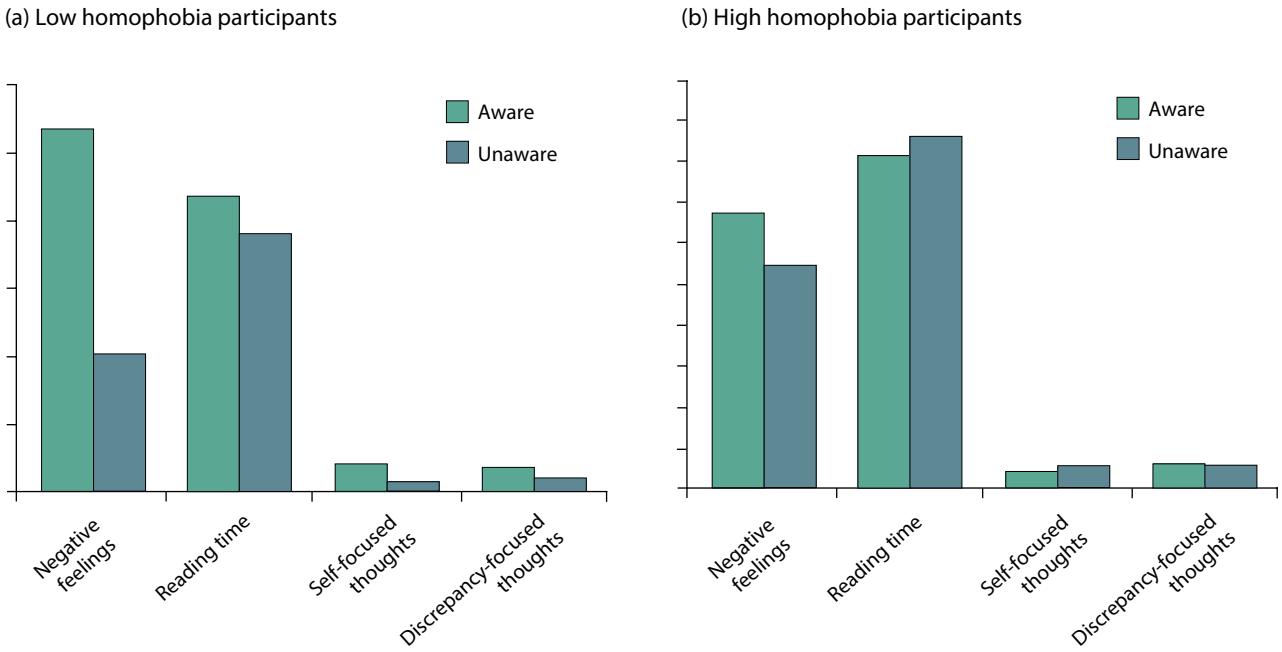

FIGURE 12.11 What happens when low prejudiced people are aware of having discriminated Low homophobia participants (a) who were made aware (vs. not made aware) of their discriminatory hiring decision reported more negative affect, spent more time reading about prejudice and experienced more self- and discrepancy-related thoughts. This awareness manipulation had no effect on homophobic participants (b), for whom a discriminatory hiring decision would not necessarily violate their moral standards.

Source: Data from Monteith (1993)

Theoretically, these guilty reactions should help people exert self-control, because they bring the self into focus, motivating people to think carefully about controlling their future behaviour. Indeed, in a subsequent experiment, Monteith (1993) led low homophobia individuals to believe they had acted in a manner discrepant with their standards. This led them to rate derogatory jokes about gays as less funny, witty and creative. In a later series of studies, Monteith, Ashburn-Nardo, Voils and Czopp (2002) found that, to some extent, practice makes perfect. The more people suppress prejudice over time, the more certain psychological cues, such as the experience of guilt and self-reflection, help them control prejudice.

TIME TO REFLECT

Monteith (1993) excluded from the study the 11 participants who accepted the applicant into law school. Why?

Can suppression backfire?

The findings we have been reviewing are impressive and cause for hope. Apparently, we have the power to control our own prejudices, at least if we really want to. Or not? Resarch suggests that some conditions make prejudice suppression difficult. For example, Noor, Reid and Doojse (2017) found that consuming alcohol makes people less able to suppress prejudice. Moreover, people who scored high on right-wing authoritarianism were less able to suppress prejudice, an effect that was made worse by alcohol consumption.

However, other research suggests that even when we are able to suppress our prejudices, they might not stay away for long. In a classic experiment, Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne and Jetten (1994, Experiment 2) explored the limits of the human ability to suppress negative attitudes towards an outgroup. They showed Welsh participants a photograph of a male skinhead, and asked them to spend five minutes writing about a typical day in his life. Half the participants were assigned, at random, to the suppression condition. These participants were told that our perceptions of others are often based on stereotypic preconditions, and were asked to try to avoid thinking about the skinhead in a stereotyped way while writing their stories. The remaining participants were assigned to the control condition, and were merely asked to write the story without any such condition.

The manipulation was successful. Participants managed to suppress stereotypes while writing the stories. Those in the suppression condition wrote stories that were rated by independent coders (who were blind to conditions, which means that they did not know the instructions each participant had been given) as significantly less stereotypical than the controls. But of greater interest to Macrae et al. (1994) was what happened after participants had finished the stories and were no longer required to suppress the stereotypes. At this point, the experimenter told participants that they were about to meet the skinhead they had just written about. The experimenter led each participant to a neighbouring room containing a row of eight chairs. A denim jacket and bag, apparently belonging to the skinhead, were slung on a chair at one end of this row. The experimenter explained that the skinhead had left the room temporarily, and invited the participant to have a seat. The dependent variable in this study was how far away from the skinhead's belongings the participants chose to sit, from 1 (the next chair) to 7 (the furthermost chair).

What would you expect to happen? It would make sense to predict that those in the suppression condition would sit closer to the skinhead's belongings, right? Presumably, they have put their negative feelings aside and thus would feel more comfortable anticipating being close to the skinhead. But the exact opposite happened – those who had suppressed stereotypes sat *further away* than those who had been allowed to make their stories as stereotypical as they liked. Why? Macrae's findings reveal something about mental regulation. Once you have finished suppressing an unwanted set of thoughts or feelings, it can 'rebound', coming back stronger than ever. According to the leading theoretical explanation of this **rebound effect of thought suppression**, it happens because thought suppression relies on two types of mental machinery. The first monitors mental content for any sign of the unwanted thought, and alerts the second system that is responsible for eliminating or replacing it. Ironically, the monitoring machinery *activates* the unwanted thought (see Chapter 2 for coverage of the concept of activation). Thus, when participants give up trying to control the unwanted thought, it is left highly activated but is no longer being dealt with. So, in a rush and quite unchecked, it enters consciousness (see Figure 12.12). This theoretical process is known as **ironic monitoring** (Wegner, 2009).

Rebound effect of thought suppression The finding that after suppressing an unwanted thought, it can come back stronger than before.

Ironic monitoring The idea that monitoring mental content for signs of unwanted thoughts can ironically activate the unwanted thought.

CREATAS

FIGURE 12.12 Can you avoid thinking about white bears? Wegner's (1994, 2009) research suggests that you may not. He instructed participants not to think of white bears. People were able to follow this instruction quite well, until the instruction lapsed. When permitted to think what they wanted, participants reported extraordinarily frequent and intense thoughts of white bears, compared to a control group.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Monteith's and Macrae's ideas can be linked to philosophical models of humanity. The Enlightenment model sees human beings as functioning best when irrational and unwanted impulses are kept in check. The Romantic model suggests that human nature is warped, with harmful consequences when people try to control their deepest impulses and desires. Whose ideas map onto the conception of Enlightenment and whose are Romantic? (If this is not immediately clear, it may help to look up 'Enlightenment' and 'Romantic' philosophy online.)

This research shows that attempts to suppress stereotypes can rebound. Should we conclude that suppression is too risky a strategy for the reduction of prejudice, and look instead to other techniques for improving intergroup relations? This would be a sad conclusion, casting doubt as it does on the efforts of human beings worldwide to improve themselves in this important respect – to turn their backs on messages of hatred, intolerance and group-based inferiority in favour of a humane appreciation of equality. Fortunately, we have evidence that suppression can work in other circumstances (Monteith, Sherman & Devine, 1998). In the Wales of the early 1990s, there were few, if any, social rules that said to people that it was not okay to stereotype skinheads. This was not, and still is not, a group that is normatively 'protected' from prejudice (Crandall et al., 2002). As a result, participants were not used to suppressing stereotyped thoughts about skinheads. As we have seen, practice appears to make perfect (Monteith et al., 2002). Indeed, research suggests that if people are motivated over a period of years to think of groups as equals, they are unable to control even unconscious forms of stereotyping and prejudice in their thinking (Moskowitz, Gollwitzer, Wasel & Schaal, 1999). As we saw in Chapter 4, these unconscious, automatic or implicit forms of stereotyping and prejudice are commonly thought to be the most resistant to change.

THE MEDIA AND REAL-WORLD CONFLICT

One recent development in prejudice reduction research involves the role of the mass media in reducing conflict. Paluck (2009) argued that, for many years, psychological research has attempted to reduce prejudice and intergroup conflict with various methods, but that scholars still know relatively little about what interventions have been shown to reduce prejudice and conflict in real-world settings (Paluck & Green, 2009). Paluck argued that a largely ignored source of knowledge may lie in the mass media's role in shaping beliefs and behaviours, especially those related to prejudice. After the two world wars, social psychologists were interested in the role of propaganda in improving intergroup attitudes and reducing conflict and prejudice (e.g., Doob, 1935; Cooper & Jahoda, 1947), but this interest waned over the years as researchers became more focused on other methods of conflict reduction, and contact in particular.

Paluck (2009) focused on the central African country of Rwanda, in which 10 per cent of the population (and 75 per cent of the Tutsi ethnic minority population) were killed in an act of genocide during a three-month period of intense conflict in 1994. Radio communication was instrumental in fuelling the conflict as it is the most important form of mass media in Rwanda. It is well documented that radio communication was culpable in the genocide of 1994 (e.g., Article 19, 1996; Li, 2004; Thompson, 2007) and is specifically relevant to intergroup conflict as, just as in other parts of the developing world, Rwandan people gather together to listen to the radio (Bourgault, 1995; Hendy, 2000). Ten years after the conflict, a nongovernmental organization produced an 'education entertainment' soap opera specifically designed to promote reconciliation between the ethnic groups in Rwanda. The programme contained messages designed to address the mistrust, lack of communication and interaction, and the trauma remaining from the genocide. It contained educational messages designed to influence listeners' beliefs about the origins and prevention of prejudice, as well as paths to healing. It also contained information about norms – demonstrations of what listeners' peers do (descriptive norms) and should do (prescriptive norms) in everyday situations.

Paluck (2009) conducted a year-long field study to examine the effect of the programme on people's beliefs, perception of social norms and behaviours. Specifically, Paluck attempted to answer three questions. First, do the mass media have the capacity to influence personal beliefs about prejudice, violence and trauma? Second, can the media influence perceptions of social norms? Third, can the media influence behaviour? Communities were randomly assigned to a treatment condition (they listened to the radio programme), or a control condition (they listened to a radio programme about health and were asked not to listen to the other programme which was publicly available). Results revealed that the reconciliation programme did not significantly influence listeners' personal beliefs, but it did significantly influence listeners' perceptions of social norms. Further, normative perceptions were realized by actual behaviours such as active negotiation, open expression about sensitive topics and cooperation. Thus, Paluck argued that in order to change prejudiced behaviour, a useful technique may be to target social norms rather than personal beliefs, and the mass media are a useful way to do so. This suggestion presents a challenge to other prejudice reduction techniques, which typically target personal beliefs and cognitive processes as the main source of prejudice.

However, this approach also has some limitations. Perhaps the results are specific to the Rwandan culture and context. Perhaps the study does not consider the influence of age, particularly the possibility that younger listeners tend to be more influenced since their beliefs are more flexible than older people's beliefs (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989). Also, although media exposure may lead to less bigotry and prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 2001), if people are exposed to

other sources of prejudice or negative stereotypes in the media or elsewhere, anti-prejudice interventions will have limited effect. The approach also raises some questions, such as how durable the effects are and how exactly the media work to influence perceptions of norms and thus prejudiced behaviour. Such issues may be addressed by longitudinal research, which would enable researchers to examine the social, political or individual processes that change over time to influence the perception of social norms. The Ethics and Research Methods box below looks at reducing real-world intergroup conflict.

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Reducing real-world intergroup conflict

A great deal of research on prejudice reduction tests various techniques within controlled laboratory settings. In such *laboratory experiments,* units of observation (e.g., people, school classrooms) are randomly assigned to either a 'treatment' condition, which involves the specific prejudice reduction intervention of interest, or to a 'control' condition, where no intervention is implemented or the participants complete an irrelevant task. While there are significant advantages to this approach, Paluck and Green (2009) suggest there are some significant limitations of laboratory studies when it comes to making conclusions about prejudice reduction in real-world contexts.

Paluck and Green (2009) argue that with the drive for simplification and experimental control, laboratory experiments may 'eliminate elements of their intervention environments, and theories that are critical to the external validity of their lessons for real-world prejudice reduction' (p. 349). Perhaps most importantly, the situations engineered in laboratory experiments often lack correspondence with regular contexts of conflict. How can the results of laboratory experiments realistically be applied to real-world situations of conflict, with all their history and complexity?

Further, Paluck and Green (2009) argue that laboratory experiments test 'quick fixes' – for example, prejudice is measured, intervened upon and reassessed within the scope of a brief study typically taking less than one hour. As we alluded to earlier, how can researchers know if the effects of the intervention last much longer than the study period? Also, many of the prejudice reduction techniques tested in the laboratory are subtle and often minimal – for example, people might be asked to wear the same colour T-shirt or sit near each other. In contrast, real-world situations involve more significant impositions such as citizenship requirements and economic sanctions. Laboratory interventions also pay little attention to the roles of power and authority that typically exist in real-world conflict situations and significantly influence the perceptions of roles, norms and stereotypes. Further, the reliance on predominantly US college students to test prejudice interventions arguably limits the scope of the findings' applicability, since they tend to report less prejudice than the average person (Judd, Park, Ryan, Brauer & Kraus, 1995) and are more aware of the social proscriptions against the expression of prejudice (Crandall et al., 2002).

Paluck and Green outline several other key problems with the laboratory-based experimental approach to studying prejudice reduction. They argue that *field experiments* – randomized experiments that test the effects of real-world interventions (e.g., like the radio programme we described above) in naturalistic settings (e.g., communities) – are a more effective way of studying prejudice reduction. They posit that the strength of field experiments rests on their ability to assess causal relationships and their ability to examine whether an intervention is effective – and persistent – among a vast array of real-world influences, including political climate, economic changes, social pressures and distractions.

Questions

1. Paluck and Green's (2009) analysis makes a strong argument for the inclusion of more field experiments in the area of prejudice reduction. However, there are some obvious barriers to conducting such studies. Write down some of these barriers and potential limitations and then read Paluck and Green's (2009) review for further insights and perspectives. Why do social psychologists favour experimental laboratory approaches over field experiments?
2. How might the field experimental approach contribute to theory on prejudice reduction?

EXPLORING FURTHER

Another prejudice reduction technique is to allow the subjects to experience prejudice for themselves. Jane Elliott, an Iowa school teacher, pioneered this technique in her own classroom in the 1960s and became known globally for her anti-racism demonstration. She divided her classroom into children who had brown eyes and those with blue (and other coloured) eyes. Blue-eyed children were first designated as the 'superior' group. Elliott asked the brown-eyed children to wear collars as a way of identifying the minority group. The blue-eyed children were given special privileges, sat in the front of the classroom (while the brown-eyed children sat at the back) and drank from special water fountains that the brown-eyed children were not allowed to drink from. She singled out the brown-eyed children and referred to them with stereotypes such as being lazy and sloppy. Immediately, Elliott noticed changes in the behaviour of both groups and how they interacted with each other – the 'superior' group becoming bossy and arrogant and the 'inferior' group becoming submissive and timid. The next day, the exercise was reversed, making the brown-eyed group superior to the blue-eyed group. What do you think happened? Evidence is mixed, both regarding its effectiveness and the stress it causes (e.g., Stewart, LaDuke, Bracht, Sweet & Gamarel, 2003). In your own time, learn more about Jane Elliott's demonstration and what can be learned from it. Consider the ethical implications of asking children to participate in such an exercise. Consult a relatively recent review of diversity training programmes to find out more about what works well, and what works less well (Bezrukova, Spell, Perry & Jehn, 2016).

INTERGROUP APOLOGY AND FORGIVENESS

As we saw in Chapter 10, it is possible to see groups as agents, whose members do not just act as individuals but together act as a collective. This means that it is possible for groups to acquire a kind of collective moral responsibility for their actions. For some thinkers, this means that when one group has transgressed against another, it is morally obliged to consider offering an apology (Brooks, 1999; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008). Perhaps the moral obligation to apologize is more pressing if it can be shown that the apology benefits the group that has been wronged. However, to date, social psychologists have not turned their attention to this question. Another intended function of apology, however, is to allow the perpetrator and victim groups to reconcile with each other. What makes a good intergroup apology? Blatz, Schumann and Ross (2009) identified ten elements of government apologies that theory and research suggest should make them satisfactory so far as the victim group is concerned (see Table 12.1).

TABLE 12.1 Ten elements of government apologies that should make them satisfactory to victim groups

Desirable elements of collective (government) apologies	Plain English examples
1 Show remorse	'We are sorry'
2 Accept responsibility	'It's our fault'
3 Admit injustice or wrong	'What we did was wrong'
4 Acknowledge harm or suffering	'We know we hurt you'
5 Promise to act better	'We will not do it again'
6 Offer reparation	'We will compensate you'
7 Address identity concerns	'We now appreciate and value you'
8 Minimize resistance from own group	'We are better now'
9 Praise current system	'This is a good country'
10 Dissociate from the past	'This would never happen now'

Source: Blatz et al. (2009). Copyright © 2009 by John Wiley Sons, Inc. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The first six elements had already been studied in research on apologies between individuals. The last four were specific to intergroup contexts and based mostly on theory rather than research findings. Blatz et al. (2009) found some of these elements present in all governmental apologies, such as in the South African premier's apology to Black people for apartheid, and the Queen's apology to New Zealand Maori for the illegitimate seizure of their lands. However, they were all present in only one apology. This will surprise many Australian readers, because, according to Blatz et al. (2009), the only apology that scored 10 out of 10 was an apology they attributed to Australian Prime Minister John Howard in 1999, regarding the forcible removal of a 'stolen generation' of Aboriginal children from their families. This certainly came as news to us in researching this textbook, as we knew that John Howard had spent many years before and after 1999 refusing to apologize, and that Kevin Rudd, his successor, had delivered what seems to most Australians to have been the first such apology. John Howard, no longer in office, criticized Kevin Rudd's apology as a mistake. This case raises a number of questions about what counts as an apology, how subjective the perception of an apology and its elements might be and thus how it might differ from person to person, and also, just possibly, the striking phenomenon of collective amnesia for apologies.

Research by Giner-Sorolla, Castano, Espinosa and Brown (2008) adds another element to the mix. They studied the importance of the emotions an outgroup member expresses in the process of making apologies and offering reparations. They found that ingroup members can be offended and feel insulted if apologies and offers of reparations are offered without emotion or with guilt. Only shame, a self-conscious emotion associated with low self-esteem and self-abasement, was enough to defuse the feeling of insult. Augoustinos, Lecouteur and Soyland (2002) also demonstrated how subtle features of reconciliation attempts may backfire. They conducted a discourse analysis of the speech made by Australian Prime Minister John Howard at the 1997 Reconciliation Convention. Recall earlier that Prime Minister Howard never supported making an official government apology to the Aboriginal people, instead later using a semantically different term – 'regret' – for what happened. Augoustinos et al. were particularly interested in the themes emerging from Howard's speech to the convention. They found that he relied heavily on arguments about 'togetherness', 'culture' and 'nation', which are often drawn upon in political addresses to justify exploitation and unequal power relations between groups. Because Howard was also justifying his refusal to apologise, the speech was unsurprisingly met by delegates with hostility. However, this research also suggests that the subtleties of speech may be used to convey a meaning that – rather than achieving reconciliation – can actually reinforce an unequal status quo.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Blatz et al. (2009) have helpfully posted the full texts of the government apologies they coded. Using Google Chrome, try to find this list by including search terms such as 'Political apologies' and 'reparations'. Take a look at the list. Do you agree with the authors about the elements that each apology contains? Also, take a look at Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's 2017 apology to the LGBT people of Canada. Does this apology include the necessary elements according to Blatz et al.'s (2009) analysis?

Do intergroup apologies, whatever positive effects they might have, elicit the forgiveness of the group by its victims, as the apologizers presumably intend? Intergroup forgiveness is a relatively new area of research and the signs are not good (for a review, see Blatz & Philpot,

2010). McLernon, Cairns, Hewstone and Smith (2004), studying a Northern Irish sample, found participants to be less forgiving of outgroups than people usually are in studies of interpersonal forgiveness. Philpot and Hornsey (2008) found that although good apologies convinced recipients that the outgroup felt remorse for what they had done, and would sometimes lead them to forgive the person doing the apologizing for the actions of their group, they did not affect recipients' willingness to forgive the outgroup as a whole for what it had done. More recently, Okimoto, Wenzel and Hornsey (2015) found that the expectation of apologies as the norm might actually dilute the effectiveness of the apology. After reading a statement that there are so many political apologies these days, participants (compared to those in a control group) seemed to desire an apology more, but were less likely to accept an apology on receipt.

Further, Philpot and Hornsey (2011) asked people whether the Japanese government had apologized for their aggression during the Second World War. Participants were more likely to believe (incorrectly) that they had not apologized than to believe (correctly) that they had. Although participants in Philpot and Hornsey's studies were slightly more forgiving if they felt that an apology had been issued, memory for apology was generally so poor that it is difficult to fully appreciate how apology may influence forgiveness. Wohl, Hornsey and Bennett (2012) argued that one reason why apologies may not be terribly effective in eliciting forgiveness is because people view the outgroup as less able to experience complex, uniquely human emotions such as remorse. In support of this idea, they found that Canadian participants forgave Afghanis for a friendly fire incident to the extent that they perceived Afghanis as able to experience emotions such as anguish. The role of apology in the reconciliation process becomes more complex still if the victim group refuses to accept the apology. Harth, Hornsey and Barlow (2011) reminded participants about an ingroup transgression and were told that their ingroup had apologized to the target group. Participants were then placed into one of two conditions – one where the target group accepted the apology, or another where the group rejected it – and were asked to rate the target group. Results revealed that when the target rejected the apology, they were met with a strong emotional backlash and were rated with higher levels of racism. Participants also expressed reduced willingness to financially compensate the target group.

Facilitating intergroup forgiveness is a major challenge confronting researchers. The early signs are that apologies may not be a fruitful route to this goal (Wohl, Hornsey & Philpot, 2011). However, recent research points to the fact that the dehumanization of the apologizer may be partly responsible for a lack of evidence linking apology and forgiveness. If victim groups view the apologizing group as capable of experiencing complex emotions such as remorse, forgiveness increases. Further, an ingroup proxy apologizer can eliminate the negative influence of dehumanization (Wohl et al., 2012). When an ingroup member relays the apology, trust and forgiveness become more likely. The message and tone of the apology may be important too. For example, empathic messages may improve attitudes towards an apologizing group, if trust in the group is high (Nadler & Livitian, 2006). Further, messages may be viewed as more empathic, and forgiveness may increase, when victimized groups feel they have the autonomy to accept or reject the apology (Kachanoff, Caouette, Wohl & Taylor, 2017). The path to reconciliation via apology may therefore be possible if the right conditions are met.

COMMUNICATION AND NEGOTIATION

More often than not, communication enables people to cooperate and overcome conflict (Bornstein, Rapoport, Kerpel & Katz, 1989). Especially in the case of social dilemmas, when conflicting parties communicate with each other, they approach the issue as a common problem

that needs to be dealt with in the interests of everyone. Communication can be particularly effective if conducted face to face, as it encourages people (or maybe even forces them) to follow established norms and adhere to certain expectations (Bouas & Komorita, 1996; Kerr & Kaufman-Gilliland, 1994). Three main elements make communication work as a method of conflict reduction and resolution. These are bargaining, mediation and arbitration:

Bargaining
Conflicting parties seek an end to the conflict through a process of negotiation.

1 **Bargaining**: when both groups are fighting over something, one thing they can do to resolve the conflict is to attempt to bargain their way out of the problem. Specifically, one group can offer something and the other group either accepts it or communicates a counter offer. One question is whether it is best to drive a 'hard bargain' and go into the communication with a strong offer, or to attempt to resolve the conflict with a more reasonable, conciliatory offer. Some research suggests that tough bargaining may be effective because it reduces the other party's expectations, making them willing to accept less for themselves (Yukl, 1974). However, too much inflexibility can present conflicting parties with a situation where both lose out. Consider some serious world conflicts that have led to war, for example. Arguably, conflict escalated as a result of neither side being willing to negotiate a reasonable solution for all involved. As we discussed in Chapter 5, 'saving face' is a primary concern for humans (Goffman, 1955), and conceding more than one wants to concede, or backing down on a conflict from which a hard bargain is being driven, can mean a serious loss of face.

Mediation
Conflicting parties seek an end to the conflict by negotiating with the aid of a third (independent) party.

2 **Mediation**: sometimes, it is not possible to solve a problem without a third (independent) party stepping in to help. Using a mediator usually means that the parties are both prepared to make concessions and if the concessions are made with the aid of another person, it is possible for face to be saved (Pruitt, 1998). Neither party is seen as weak if they both concede equally, with the help of a third party (for a review, see Nadler & Shnabel, 2017). How does mediation work? Specifically, mediators help resolve conflicts by helping conflicting parties to rethink the situation and gain information about each other's perspective. This perspective-taking technique has been found to decrease stereotyping of a target (Esses & Dovidio, 2002; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; L. Thompson, 1990). However, sometimes it is difficult to achieve (Carroll, Bazerman & Maury, 1988; Galinsky & Mussweiler, 2001), especially in intercultural contexts, which are common in political conflict (e.g., Bond & Smith, 1996). Likewise, learning information about someone can overcome reliance on stereotypes (Crawford, Jussim, Madon, Cain & Stevens, 2011; Locksley, Borgida, Brekke & Hepburn, 1980). These processes allow the mediator to turn the situation into one where both parties can win. Indeed, with experience, mediators become more skilled at making losing situations into winning ones (Thompson, 1990). A key factor that a mediator needs to build between groups is trust (Ross & Ward, 1995) and this begins by building trust with the mediator themselves. Then, through a process of negotiation, perspective-taking and explicit statement of a group's concerns, the conflict can be overcome (e.g., Kelman, 1997; Staub, Pearlman & Miller, 2003; Staub, Pearlman, Gubin & Hagengimana, 2005).

Arbitration
Conflicting parties seek an end to the conflict with the aid of a third (independent) party who studies the situation and imposes a settlement.

3 **Arbitration**: occasionally, the conflict may be too intense or the underlying interests of the groups may be too different for negotiation to work, even with the aid of a mediator. In such a case, it may be necessary for a third-party arbitrator to actually impose a settlement on both groups. As you can imagine, this is a difficult task – the arbitrator needs to carefully study each group's history, current position, concerns, interests and so on and devise a resolution that is mutually beneficial, or as beneficial for both groups as it can possibly be. This is also a risky option for conflicting parties to take. How can each group be sure that the arbitrator will do what is best for them? It is for this reason that groups tend to prefer to bargain or go through a mediator than have a conflict resolved for them through arbitration (McGillicuddy, Welton & Pruitt, 1987).

Real-world examples attest to the effectiveness of these techniques. For example, a successful mediation process was instrumental in resolving the Israel-Egypt conflict in the late 1970s. US President Jimmy Carter brought Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin together and after 13 days of mediation, an agreement was reached that ended the long-standing conflict. A classic example of how bargaining may have helped resolve conflict can be seen in the media communication between US President George Bush (senior) and Saddam Hussein over the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. A hard line was driven between the two groups when Bush promised to 'kick Saddam's ass' and Hussein promised to make the 'infidel' Americans 'swim in their own blood' and sadly there was no going back from there.

Unfortunately, communication processes may be completely ineffective when conflicting parties are so suspicious of each other. In such instances, a process advocated by Osgood (1962) may be effective. This **graduated and reciprocated initatives in tension reduction (GRIT)** approach works on the principle that one side in the conflict initiates a few small de-escalatory actions after declaring a desire to de-escalate conflict. Often, this intention is made public so that the pressure is on the other group to reciprocate the efforts of the other side. If done voluntarily, the technique may promote a series of conciliatory actions that lead to de-escalation of the conflict. There is some evidence to suggest this works. For example, in the laboratory, social dilemmas have been found to be resolvable through a bit of 'give and take', where conflicting parties match each others' efforts (e.g., van Lange & Visser, 1999). However, this strategy can easily fall apart if one group refuses to be cooperative (e.g., Lindskold, 1981).

Graduated and reciprocated initiatives in tension reduction (GRIT)
A conflict reduction technique that relies on both groups reciprocating a series of de-escalating actions.

COLLECTIVE ACTION

Sometimes the most effective way to improve intergroup relations may not be to try to improve the way groups feel about each other, nor to bring them together in collaborative processes such as bargaining and reconciliation. The most problematic intergroup relations tend to involve entrenched inequality and conflicts of interest. In these conditions, ill feeling is a less important problem to solve than the material disadvantages that are built into the relationship between groups. Also, it is less likely in such circumstances that groups will approach each other with a sincere spirit of collaboration and reconciliation. Thus, the most effective way to improve intergroup relations may be collective action (Blumer, 1939; Major, 1994; Olson, 1965; Turner & Killian, 1993). In its general sense, **collective action** can be defined as the pursuit of goals by more than one person. It is a type of group behaviour, which was our focus throughout Chapter l0. However, in the social psychological study of intergroup relations, the term is a shorthand for the coordinated actions of disadvantaged group members in order to change intergroup relations.

Collective action
The pursuit of goals by more than one person. Specifically, it is the coordinated actions of disadvantaged group members in order to change intergroup relations.

Sometimes, collective action is not taken by group members on their own behalf, but in the wider cause of justice and in response to the needs of other groups (Thomas, McGarty & Mavor, 2009a). On 15 February 2003, in the cold of an English winter, hundreds of thousands of British people descended on London's streets to protest against the forthcoming invasion of Iraq. For several years from 1998, many thousands of non-Indigenous Australians circumvented their government's refusal to apologize for historical wrongs against Indigenous Australians by signing a 'sorry book' that contained a collective apology (Leach, Iyer & Pederson, 2006). However, since people are more likely to take action en masse on behalf of their own group, research has focused mostly on this type of collective action (see Figure 12.13). Overwhelmingly, the study of collective action is focused on protest (e.g., van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2012; van Zomeren, Postmes & Spears, 2008), but other forms of collective action may include lobbying, organized charity and volunteering (Thomas,

McGarty & Mavor, 2009b). Some famous examples of collective action have led to material advances in the welfare of the group and for wider intergroup relations. These include the velvet revolutions of the late 1980s and early 1990s in Europe, which led to the overthrow of Communist regimes throughout central and Eastern Europe, the civil rights movement in America and the feminist and gay rights movements of the 1960s to the present day. Other examples of collective action have failed owing to crushing counter-actions by authorities and advantaged groups, exemplified in the Tiananmen Square massacre of student protestors in 1989 in China. Another example of collective action is the Arab Spring pro-democracy protests and insurgencies that began in Tunisia in December 2010 and quickly spread to countries across North Africa and the Middle East.

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FIGURE 12.13 Protest: the most studied form of collective action

What motivates people to take collective action to improve their group's situation? After conducting a meta-analysis of many studies of collective action, van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears (2008) concluded that three interrelated variables are of crucial importance. In their integrative *social identity model of collective action* (SIMCA), identity is central. People who are highly identified with their group are more likely to coordinate with others and act on its behalf. As we saw in Chapters 8 and 11, strong identifiers are more willing to make personal sacrifices in the interests of their group, more likely to trust and feel close to other members of their group, and more likely to share their emotional reactions to situations (Mackie, Smith & Ray, 2008). Thus, it is not surprising that identification straightforwardly promotes collective action.

The relationship between identification and collective action is not only direct, however. It is also mediated by two other variables, which themselves affect the likelihood of collective action. One of these is perceived injustice. The more people perceive intergroup relations to be unjust, the more motivated they are to take collective action to repair the injustice. As we shall see in Chapter 14, justice is important to people, and under the right conditions, they will go to considerable lengths to correct injustices. In particular, feelings of relative deprivation are important (we shall learn more about this concept in Chapter 13). Relative deprivation

is the sense that one, or one's group, is deprived of benefits that others enjoy. Feeling relative deprivation as individuals, people often respond in counterproductive ways, including with aggression. But when they share with others a sense that their group is relatively deprived – a feeling known as fraternal, or group-based, relative deprivation, they are likely to take collective action (Dube-Simard & Guimond, 1986; Runciman, 1966; van Zomeren, Spears & Leach, 2008). The more strongly people identify with their disadvantaged group, the more they tend to perceive its situation as unjust. Finally, an important variable is the perceived efficacy of the group to change its situation. When collective action seems destined to fail, or to achieve only small gains, people are less likely to engage. People who strongly identify with their disadvantaged group are more likely to perceive that it has the power to make a difference to its own situation (Mummendey, Kessler, Klinke & Mielke, 1999) (see Figure 12.14). More recently, van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears (2012) have also demonstrated that people's moral convictions – having strong stances on moral issues – predict collective action and achieve social change. Further, Jost, Becker, Osborne and Badaan (2017) argue that ideological variables – particularly the motivation to justify the social status quo – should be considered. Specifically, injustices and inequalities sometimes increase people's moral outrage but at other times people find ways to justify them, and whether or not they do so should determine whether or not they will pursue collective action. Other models of collective action are broadly similar to the SIMCA model, but some emphasize other factors such as intergroup emotions, including anger (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2012).

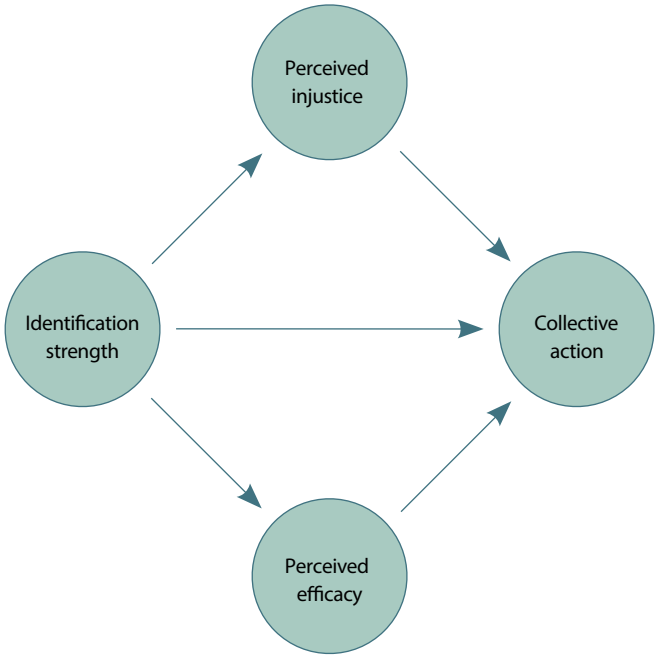

FIGURE 12.14 The SIMCA model of group identification
Collective action is promoted by perceptions that a group's position is unjust, and the group is able to unify to improve its position. The strength of members' identification with the group also promotes collective action, both directly and by serving as the 'bridge' between perceptions of injustice and efficacy. Thus, identification has direct and mediated effects on collective action.

Source: van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears (2008). Copyright © 2008 by American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

EXPLORING FURTHER

In 2009, the *Journal of Social Issues* published an excellent special issue on collective action (volume 65, issue 4) containing articles by several leading researchers. Locate this and read through the abstracts to get a flavour of developments in this field. Another excellent read is the article by Dixon, Levine, Reicher and Durrheim (2012) in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, which is published along with several commentaries from peers. This reading will give you an excellent insight into the known facts, the untapped potential and the limits of collective action as a basis of improving intergroup relations.

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Take a look at the Student Project on page 645 by Alexandra Björnstjerna Hjelm from Linköping University. Alexandra conducted a qualitative study of interprofessional healthcare education groups, which is relevant to the work on contact and cooperation discussed in this chapter. It is also relevant to the study of communication (Chapter 5), social groups (Chapter 8), and group behaviour (Chapter 10).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Improving intergroup relations is a primary concern for social psychologists. In this chapter we considered the major strategies to do so. Specifically, you have learned that:

- One method of prejudice reduction is to favour minority groups over majorities in isolated episodes. This is called tokenism, and although it may be well intentioned, it can be used unconsciously as a means to disguise one's prejudices. Other specific forms of tokenism are affirmative action and the positive feedback bias.
- A more extreme version of tokenism is reverse discrimination, where people who harbour negative attitudes towards particular minority groups display pro-minority behaviour or public behaviour that favours the minority, as a way to deflect accusations of prejudice. A challenge for social psychologists is to separate well-intentioned behaviour from behaviour that has intentions to conceal underlying negative attitudes.
- Intergroup contact has become the most studied method of reducing prejudice. The basic tenet of contact theory is that bringing together members of opposing groups should improve intergroup relations and reduce prejudice and discrimination, if certain optimal conditions are met (equality of status, common goals, intergroup cooperation and the support of authorities, law or custom). Research suggests that contact is generally effective in reducing prejudice.
- When contact is not possible, research shows that participants who are asked to think about vicarious contact – contact that friends or acquaintances have with minorities – show reduced prejudice. This is called extended contact. Simply imagining positive contact with an outgroup member can reduce prejudice in laboratory settings.
- Techniques based on the cognitive process of categorization have also been used to reduce prejudice. For example, the common ingroup identity model suggests that if members of opposing groups are encouraged to recategorize themselves as members of the same ingroup, intergroup attitudes will improve. However, it may be counterproductive to ignore identification with smaller, more distinct groups. It is best to complement this identification with superordinate identities that can include other groups. Another model – the social identity complexity model – argues that the more complex a person's social identity, that is, the less their group memberships overlap or are related to each other, the more positive they are likely to feel about the outgroup.
- Other approaches have been concerned with values such as tolerance, multiculturalism and egalitarianism, which may encourage positive attitudes and behaviours towards outgroups. In particular, multiculturalism – the ideology that diversity should be acknowledged and celebrated – is successful compared to approaches that downplay differences between groups (e.g., colour blindness).

- Social psychologists have investigated the extent to which people are able to suppress prejudice. Social norms suggest it is no longer acceptable to express overt prejudice towards many groups. Suppression, however, can sometimes backfire, as in the case of stereotype rebound – once a person has finished suppressing an unwanted thought, it can come back stronger than ever.
- Another approach that is more directly related to real-world conflict is the role of the media in shaping (and potentially changing for the better) people's beliefs and behaviours. It is argued that using the media overcomes many of the limitations of laboratory experimentation.
- Apology is seen as an obligation of a group that has transgressed against another group. There are said to be several features that make a good apology.
- Direct communication and negotiation may be a useful way to reduce intergroup tensions, through processes of bargaining, mediation and arbitration.
- Another way of improving intergroup relations is to take collective action. Here, group members work together to promote a common cause. This cause may be the interests of their own group, or wider causes such as justice, peace and equality. Social identity, perceived injustice and the perceived efficacy of the group in being able to bring about positive changes are important to collective action. Intergroup emotions may also play a key role. Collective action is often aimed at eliminating inequality and injustice, rather than creating goodwill or reducing prejudice.

In this chapter, you have acquired a comprehensive knowledge of social psychologists' progress on the important issue of reducing intergroup conflict. We have outlined a wide range of strategies that continue to change (and new techniques emerge) as social psychologists get to grips with the complexities of intergroup conflict. In Chapter 13, we focus on yet another dark side of human behaviour – human aggression.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. Outline the advantages and disadvantages of tokenism, affirmative action and positive discrimination.
2. What is the extended contact hypothesis and what does associated research demonstrate about its effectiveness as a prejudice reduction technique?
3. Is colour blindness an effective way to improve intergroup relations? Explain your answer with respect to the common ingroup identity model and the mutual differentiation model.
4. How effective are intergroup apologies in resolving intergroup differences?

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Intergroup emotions approach

In the past 20 years or so, researchers have begun to look beyond simple prejudice – a negative emotional reaction or attitude to an outgroup – and have explored more textured, nuanced emotions towards other groups (Iyer, 2008; Mackie & Smith, 2004; Mackie et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2009a). We can experience a range of negative emotions such as anger, fear, disgust and envy towards other groups. When people's social categorization is salient, they are more likely to share these emotions with other members of their group, meaning that it makes sense to say that emotions are experienced collectively (Rydell et al., 2008). These specific emotions are often tied up in people's collective memory of their history. They may also be more important than a general feeling of negativity towards groups in predicting support for intergroup actions and policies. For example, Cottrell, Richards and Nichols (2010) found that the emotion of disgust towards gay people was more important than overall prejudice towards them in predicting people's support for gay rights, and pity towards Mexican migrants to the USA was more important than prejudice in predicting

support for caps on immigration. In the context of Northern Ireland, Tam et al. (2007) found that anger towards the outgroup predicted decreased forgiveness – and that this anger could be reduced by intergroup contact.

Intergroup emotions and intergroup behaviour are involved in a complex interplay (for a review, see Goldenberg, Halperin, van Zomeren & Gross, 2016). This is consistent with contemporary theories of emotion, which stress that emotions have important functions and are not just by-products of our experience. For evolutionary theorists, emotions function to control our responses to threats and opportunities in the environment (Levenson, 1994; Tooby & Cosmides, 1990). Emotions also serve to resolve problems in relationships (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). From this functional perspective, we would expect emotions to be related to specific action tendencies towards outgroups. From intergroup anger, but not necessarily disgust, for example, we would expect intergroup aggression to follow. Indeed, when groups are unable to respond with aggression to an outgroup that has angered them, intergroup anger intensifies, and when groups have the opportunity to aggress successfully, the emotion dissipates (Maitner, Mackie & Smith, 2006).

Collective guilt is an important intergroup emotion, which can motivate perpetrator groups to make amends for their behaviour and seek reconciliation with victim groups (e.g., Sharvit, Brambilla, Babush & Colucci, 2015; van Leeuwen, van Dijk & Kaynak, 2013; Wohl, Branscombe & Klar, 2006). In two longitudinal studies, Brown, Gonzalez, Zagefka, Mazi and Cehajic-Clancy (2008) found that non-indigenous Chileans who felt guilty about their group's actions towards indigenous Chileans (the Mapuche) throughout colonial history were later more likely to support reparation. Ironically, the atrocities committed against the ingroup can reduce feelings of guilt about the harmful aspects of its own behaviour. For example, Wohl and Branscombe (2008) found that Jewish participants, when reminded of the Holocaust, felt less guilty about Israeli treatment of Palestinians. Sometimes, people feel angry about the perceived transgressions of their group. This feeling of ingroup-directed anger, over and above guilt, predicts non-indigenous Australians' willingness to engage in political action to improve the lot of Indigenous Australians (Leach et al., 2006). British people who felt angry about their country's participation in the war against Iraq were more likely to want to compensate Iraq, to confront people seen as responsible for the war, such as Tony Blair, and to withdraw British troops from Iraq (Iyer, Schmader & Lickel, 2007).

This approach to understanding intergroup relations may suggest ways in which intergroup relations can improve. If we pay attention not just to the relatively coarse outcome of generalized prejudice, but also to the specific emotions that people feel towards their own and other groups, we may be able to improve intergroup relations.

Schadenfreude
Pleasurable emotions arising from the misfortune or suffering of other individuals or groups.

1. An interesting intergroup emotion is Schadenfreude – defined as a feeling of joy derived from the misfortunes of others. Using Google Scholar or a similar database, find social psychological research on Schadenfreude. What effects does Schadenfreude appear to have on subsequent intergroup relations? What conditions increase Schadenfreude, and what conditions decrease it?
2. In light of what you have read in this chapter, should victim groups let go of anger? What are the advantages and disadvantages of intergroup anger for victim groups? You might want to read an interesting piece by Thomas et al. (2009a) to help you.
3. Can you find any intervention specifically targeting an intergroup emotion in order to effect some improvement in intergroup relations? If not, do you think such an intervention manipulation is possible? Consider, for example, some of the embodied emotion manipulations of Chapter 4.

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources including videos and self-test multiple choice questions to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

De Dreu, C.K.W. (2010). Social conflict: The emergence and consequences of struggle and negotiation. In S.T. Fiske, D.T. Gilbert & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (5th ed., vol. 2, pp. 983–1023). New York: Wiley. Detailed discussion of the role of negotiation in resolving conflict between groups.

Dixon, J., Levine, M., Reicher, S., & Durrheim, K. (2012). Beyond prejudice: Are negative evaluations the problem and is getting us to like one another more the solution? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *35*(6), 411–25. We have already referred you to this reading but it is essential – and well worth reading the many open peer commentaries that are published underneath the main article.

Louis, W.R. (2009). Collective action – and then what? *Journal of Social Issues*, *65*(4), 727–48. Winnifred Louis's insightful analysis of collective action pulls no punches as it considers an important and (still) relatively neglected question: how and when does collective action lead to social change? Most of the research on collective action has examined what leads people to take collective action (or not), rather than what difference collective action makes.

Nadler, A., & Shnabel, N. (2017). Intergroup reconciliation: Instrumental and socio-emotional processes and the needs-based model. *European Review of Social Psychology*, *26*, 93–125. A good recent overview of the processes that help and hinder reconciliation between groups who have been in conflict.

Sibley, C.G., & Barlow, F.K. (Eds.). (2018). *The Cambridge handbook of the psychology of prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. An extensive collection of chapters on prejudice, and prejudice reduction, written by leading researchers. There is also a concise student edition by the same editors (listed in the other order).

Thompson, L.L. (2009). *The mind and heart of the negotiator* (4th edn). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Clear and comprehensive overview of the psychology of negotiation.

Van Zomeren, M., & Louis, W.R. (2017). Culture meets collective action: Exciting synergies and some lessons to learn for the future. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *20*(3), 277–284. Introduction to a special issue on cultural variations in the form and meaning of collective action.

CHAPTER 13 UNDERSTANDING AND CONTROLLING AGGRESSION

In this chapter, we outline the causes of aggression and discuss the means by which aggression may be reduced. We outline the basic types of aggression that researchers have studied. We discuss the biological, social and cultural roots of aggressive behaviour, and consider the intergroup, as well as the interpersonal, aspects of aggression. At the end of this chapter, you will have learned about the key theories and perspectives in the study of aggression.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- The human animal: biological bases of aggression
- The social animal: social causes of aggression
- The tribal animal: the group dimension of aggression

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Wherever you go in the world, you will encounter human aggression. At whatever time of human history (not to mention prehistory) you care to examine, you will also find evidence of human aggression. Since time immemorial, people have beaten, clubbed, stabbed, choked, hung, shot and tortured each other, applying not just their animal strength but also their human ingenuity to the problem of how to hurt other people. Indeed, for philosophers such as Hobbes ([1651] 2007), extreme levels of aggression are natural for human beings. Hobbes argued that a stable infrastructure of laws, institutions and governments is required to keep human aggression in check; without it, human life is 'nasty, brutish, and short'.

As we shall see in this chapter, there are all sorts of reasons why human beings are so aggressive. To some extent, evolution appears to have hard-wired aggression into our biology, as it has all animals whose survival has depended on the ability to fight and kill. Matters are not helped by our ability to feel deprived relative to others, to experience injustice keenly, to attribute responsibility and intentionality to the annoying or frustrating behaviour of others, and to experience anger when we do so. Finally, many of the social processes that begin when we gather in groups also seem to lead to aggression.

Realistically, human beings will always display some aggression, although many of our instincts and aspirations are much more noble, as other philosophers such as Dryden (see Scott, 1883) and Rousseau ([1762]1998) have pointed out. The hope motivating research on aggression is that by understanding its causes, we can begin to reduce the terrible toll it takes on the lives of people worldwide. Social psychology is well placed to do this. With its commitment to scientific methods, it can add evidence and discovery to the insights of philosophers such as Hobbes. There is hope, then, that we may be able to alleviate the problem of humanity's inhumanity to humanity.

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What is aggression? This is a difficult question and you will encounter different definitions in the literature. At first, you might think of it as doing harm to others. However, if you think about it for a while, you will realize that doing harm is not a necessary component of aggression. You might try to hit someone, and miss, so you have not hurt them – but your act was surely aggressive. Neither is hurt sufficient for aggression. If you make the mistake of going to the dentist, there is a good chance they will hurt you. But not all dentists are bad people, and their goal is not necessarily to hurt you. Most researchers now think that the intention to hurt is a key component of aggression (e.g., Geen, 1990). Thus, a decent working definition for **aggression** is behaviour primarily intended to harm another living being. Note that 'harm' is a broad term and this is deliberate. Although **physical aggression** is probably the form of aggression that comes most easily to mind, and is discussed the most in this chapter, much aggression does not involve physical harm. Insults, malicious gossip, ostracism and hate speech are all acts of **social aggression** that are intended to harm, but will not break your bones or directly cause you any kind of physical damage.

Aggression
Behaviour primarily intended to harm another living being.

Physical aggression
Behaviour intended to cause physical harm to another living being.

Social aggression
Behaviour intended to cause harm to another person's emotional or social wellbeing without inflicting physical injury.

Among nonhuman animals, it is also useful to distinguish two types of aggression. *Hostile aggression* occurs between members of the same species, is accompanied by displays of anger and is often triggered by competition over resources such as food, mates or status. *Instrumental* (or 'silent') *aggression* occurs between animals of different species, such as predator-prey pairs, and is not accompanied by displays of anger (Bushman & Anderson, 1998; Renfrew, 1993). This distinction has often been applied to human aggression, too. In humans, hostile aggression (also known as 'impulsive', 'affective' or 'angry' aggression) is said to be accompanied and motivated

by angry feelings, typically impulsive rather than thought out, and motivated entirely to hurt someone. In contrast, instrumental aggression is premeditated, rather more coolly calculated behaviour that is motivated to hurt someone, but in the service of some other goal, such as for money or revenge. However, its application to human beings has been heavily criticized, largely on the basis that many acts of human aggression have hostile and instrumental components. Premeditated murder is often motivated by anger, and impulsive acts of aggression may be triggered by threats to one's status or a sense of injustice (Bushman & Anderson, 2001). Thus, we will not distinguish between these forms of aggression in this chapter.

THE HUMAN ANIMAL: BIOLOGICAL BASES OF AGGRESSION

Although human beings' approach to aggression is uniquely diverse, clever and technological, many thinkers have seen our willingness to aggress as part of our animal heritage. In their view, human beings, like other animals, have been equipped by evolution with a biology that predisposes us to aggress. The most thorough and influential statement of this biological view of aggression was made by Lorenz (1966), an Austrian **ethologist** who was awarded the Nobel Prize for his work.

Ethology The study of animal behaviour.

Biological drive theories of aggression

Lorenz's analysis of aggression was heavily influenced by two great thinkers. From Freud ([1930]2004), he got the idea that human behaviour is instinctive and affected by the *psychodynamic* build-up and release of energies within the individual. From Darwin ([1859]1996), he got the idea that instincts are acquired through natural selection, and that natural selection is driven by struggle between rivals. For Lorenz (1966), it is 'always favourable for the species if the stronger of two rivals takes possession of the territory or of the desired female' (p. 27). As a result of this evolutionary pressure, human beings and most other animals have developed a 'fighting instinct', causing them to aggress against members of the same species. This fighting instinct drives our behaviour in much the same way as our instinctive desire to eat, drink and have sex – all activities that are central to our ability to pass on our genes to our descendants. Lorenz (1966) argued that in much the same way as hunger and thirst, the desire to aggress is a kind of energy that builds up within the organism, getting stronger and stronger. It is released when external circumstances, such as the annoying or provocative behaviour of another person, allow the organism to 'consummate' its desire to aggress.

Lorenz's analysis has two important and rather depressing implications for human aggression. First, it implies that aggression is inevitable, being caused by a biologically programmed, hormonally regulated build-up of aggressive energy that needs to find some release. Second, it implies that in much the same way as hungry people go looking for food, people whose aggressive energy has built up to uncomfortable levels will seek out opportunities to aggress – to pick fights and look for trouble. Is this level of pessimism warranted? This depends on how well Lorenz's theory stacks up conceptually, and whether it is supported by evidence. Although it is important that we treat theories and findings on their scientific merits (as we saw in Chapter 3, people are inclined to wishful thinking, being sceptical of strong science that contradicts their cherished beliefs, and uncritically accepting of weak science that reinforces their preconceptions), it is perhaps fortunate that there are some important reasons to be sceptical about the pessimistic implications of Lorenz's theory.

For one thing, his analysis was built on a flawed understanding of evolutionary theory. You will note that Lorenz (1966) argued that aggression is 'favourable for the species', but natural selection is not driven by the survival of the species. Evolution is driven much more strongly by what is good for individuals and their families than what is good for larger groups – especially

groups as large as an entire species (Dawkins, 1976; Dunbar, 1993, 1998). Also, although it is clear that aggression has been an important part of the success of individual human beings and the species as a whole, it is not clear that aggression is always a good thing for perpetrators. In human societies, at least, individuals who are overly or inappropriately aggressive, even if they manage to avoid incurring serious injury or death in the process, often find themselves punished and excluded by the group (e.g., Barner-Barry, 1986). This is scarcely a recipe for reproductive success. Thus, it would seem unlikely that there would be any advantage in having a hard-wired need to aggress that gets stronger the longer it is pent up.

Another major problem for Lorenz's theory arises from one of its most central ideas. For Lorenz, the build-up of aggressive energy within an individual may not lead to disastrous acts of aggression if it is released in a process known as **catharsis**. This is the familiar idea that if you can harmlessly release pent-up feelings of anger and frustration, you are less likely to actually take them out on someone else. As the idea goes, if you whack a punch bag, burn an effigy of your lecturer or even engage in revenge fantasies, your aggressive energy will dissipate. You may not be restored to a Zen-like calm, but at least you will be less likely to hurt people. Lorenz's thinking on catharsis was similar to, and no doubt influenced by, Freud's. Freud attributed human aggression to *thanatos,* a death instinct he thought was activated when *eros,* the innate desire to survive and to foster life, was frustrated (although Freud did not himself use the term thanatos, which was later introduced by his secretary, Paul Federn). Rather than aggress against themselves, people displace their aggressive energy and aggress towards others. Civilized societies are able to manage aggression by providing opportunities for catharsis: viewing aggressive or blood sports, for example, and expressing anger in milder forms.

Catharsis The release of pent-up aggressive energy through vicarious or symbolic acts of aggression.

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The problem with the idea of catharsis, as plausible and in tune with our intuitions as it may be, is that it appears to be wrong. Many studies have been conducted examining whether catharsis reduces aggression. Cathartic techniques that have been studied include using verbal rather than physical aggression to a provocateur (Mallick & McCandless, 1966), watching violent films (Siegel, 1956), taking out one's aggressive energy on other people (Konecni & Doob, 1972) or engaging in vigorous physical exercise or contact sports (Frinter & Rubinson, 1993). The clear majority of studies show that these attempts to cathartically release aggressive impulses do not

work (Bushman, Baumeister & Phillips, 2001; Geen & Quanty, 1977). Catharsis tends either to have no effect or actually makes matters worse, increasing the likelihood of aggression. One reason for this may be that precisely because catharsis feels good, it is rewarding. Thus, when people engage in cathartic release by watching other people aggress, or engaging in symbolic substitutes for aggression, they risk teaching themselves, subtly and unconsciously, that aggression is rewarding (see the material on social learning theory, below).

So why is the notion of catharsis so intuitively appealing? This is an interesting question that, as far as we can tell, has not been researched. Indeed, this 'blind spot' in social psychology might make an interesting student research project. Probably, we have all found it rewarding to engage in some kind of cathartic activity. If the activity is physically demanding, exciting or rewarding, then the flood of hormones such as adrenaline and endorphins is likely to have an immediate, short-term, positive effect on our sense of wellbeing. Indeed, Bushman et al. (2001) found that people engage in cathartic acts of aggression in order to improve their mood. For example, if they were told that a pill they had just taken as part of the experiment had the effect of freezing their mood, they no longer engaged in cathartic aggression. If something feels good, we may be inclined to feel that it is good for us in other ways, such as releasing our aggressive feelings. The fact that we are effectively training ourselves to be aggressive when we engage in cathartic feelings is less likely to be available to conscious awareness.

Another interesting possibility is suggested by the 'embodied social cognition' perspective we considered in Chapter 4. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) argue that people's understanding of the world is often based on their bodily experiences. Because anger and frustration lead to muscular tension and rising blood pressure (e.g., Kamarck et al., 1998), we experience a bodily feeling of heat and pressure. As a result, we talk about anger in terms of related physical metaphors (Eatough & Smith, 2006). Very angry people are 'at boiling point', and need to 'vent' or 'let off steam', otherwise they will 'blow their top', and so on. The notion of catharsis makes sense to us because, arguably, it corresponds to the metaphorical sense we make of anger and aggression. In this case, we are perhaps misled by our metaphors. Those who believe that catharsis is effective may be drawn to the very behaviours that will make their aggression worse. Indeed, a study of participants in non-aggressive and aggressive sports found that participants who believed in catharsis were more likely to engage heavily in aggressive sport (Wann et al., 1999). As we shall see later in this chapter, engaging in aggressive physical sports is a highly counterproductive way to reduce off-field aggression.

EXPLORING FURTHER

You can do a quick informal test to highlight the intuitive appeal of drive theories and catharsis in the popular understanding of aggression. Consider the following scenario and question: Your friend has a punch bag and lets the bag have it whenever someone really annoys them. They say it's a good way to let off steam and stops them from doing or saying aggressive things to people. Is this coping strategy a good idea?

Ask some friends this question, without mentioning the 'letting off steam' part. Get them to explain their answer. Without you prompting them with these ideas, do they spontaneously talk about anger and aggression in terms of energy, pressure, heat, release, cooling down and venting? Scientists rely partly on metaphor and intuition when building theories (Fletcher, 1995a, 1995b). Do you think that theorists such as Lorenz (1966) may have been informed by commonsense metaphors of anger and aggression when they postulated that catharsis is an effective means of defusing aggressive tendencies?

There are some final points worth making about catharsis. First, there are some instances where being able to aggress works, as if there were indeed a cathartic release of energy. In a set of studies conducted in the 1960s, Hokanson (1974) found that being able to retaliate against an aggressor allowed people's blood pressure to return more quickly to normal. However,

this only happened when participants could retaliate against the original wrongdoer, when the retaliation was seen as justifiable and when the wrongdoer was not intimidating. This looks less like the mechanical release of energy than satisfaction that justice has finally been done (see Chapter 14) – 'I've given this person what they deserve, and it's over now'.

The second point about catharsis is that its failure to work does not disconfirm the biological approach to aggression. It simply disconfirms aspects of some biological theories of aggression, such as Lorenz's (1966) theory. As we shall see in the rest of this chapter, there is plenty of evidence that aggression is influenced by biological factors, including our genes, our brain chemistry and our brain structure.

Genetic influences on aggression

The core of the biological approach to aggression is that the predisposition to aggress, under some circumstances, must have been of survival value to our ancestors and therefore must have been shaped by evolution. If so, we should expect to see some evidence that the tendency to aggress can be inherited. The answer seems to be clearly yes, at least in studies of nonhuman animals. In a striking study, Swedish researchers Lagerspetz and Lagerspetz (1971; Lagerspetz, 1979) isolated mice that appeared to be aggressive from those that displayed low levels of aggression, breeding these mice in two separate bloodlines. After 26 generations, they had created a race of aggressive, territorial, difficult to handle 'warrior mice', and another race of 'pacifist' mice.

In a larger scale study conducted in Siberia, the biologists Belyaev (1979) and Trut (1999) bred from a semi-wild population of silver foxes. When the breeding programme started in 1959, the vast majority of these foxes behaved as we would expect wild animals to behave. They displayed intense fear when human beings approached them and would often try to bite the handlers. Belyaev and Trut selected those foxes that were least wild and bred from them, for generation after generation. Each generation became successively tamer, showing less fear and more willingness to be handled. After a few generations, foxes with an 'elite' level of domestication began to appear. These foxes did more than tolerate their human handlers, indeed, they actively sought out contact with humans and displayed affectionate, friendly behaviours towards them, much as a domestic dog would normally do. Although these animals were a small minority even after 10 generations of breeding for tameness, they comprised over two-thirds of the population after 30 or so generations of breeding (see Figure 13.1).

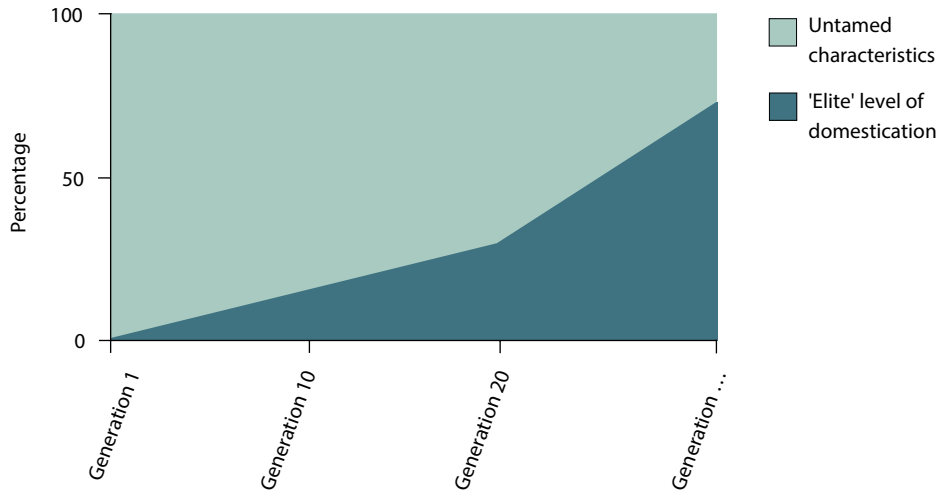

FIGURE 13.1 Proportion of foxes showing highly domesticated versus untamed characteristics

Source: Data from Trut (1979)

Notably, these behavioural characteristics were accompanied by some striking physical changes. Much more often than in the first, wild generation, the later, tame generations tended to have tails that were short or rolled in a circle and floppy ears. Most particularly, they displayed changes in their colour (that is, pigmentation). They tended to be more mottled, have a higher incidence of grey hairs and to show a white (depigmented) 'star' pattern on their face. The researchers point out that this pattern of depigmentation is common to many breeds of domestic dog. Indeed, large white patches are common to many domesticated animals, and relatively rare in the wild. It seems that the genes controlling aggression in many animals are also responsible for a number of physical characteristics. For biologists like Belyaev (1979) and Trut (1999), this makes sense – behaviour, aggression included, is regulated by hormones and neurochemicals, so selecting for tameness and against aggression amounts to selecting animals according to their **endocrinology**. These biochemical features regulate not just behaviour but all sorts of physical characteristics as the animal grows.

Endocrinology The manufacture, storage, chemistry and biological function of hormones within the body.

The silver fox experiment, like Lagerspetz's (1979) 'warrior mice' study, provides a controlled demonstration of commonsense wisdom about animals. Wild animals tend to be born wild and cannot be tamed. Some species are more aggressive than others. Some breeds within species are more aggressive than others, which is why certain dogs, such as the American pit bull, are banned in several countries (e.g., DEFRA, 2009). Indeed, these experiments can be seen merely as accelerated simulations of the selective breeding to which people have been subjecting their animals for millennia, giving us the array of domesticated animals we see today. This seems to provide compelling evidence that the level of aggression shown by nonhuman animals, and potentially ourselves, is indeed influenced by genes.

TIME TO REFLECT

A central plank of evolutionary psychology is that important aspects of our behaviour are controlled by our genes. Are the silver fox and warrior mice studies definitive evidence that this point is right?

For obvious ethical and practical reasons, there has not been a study on human beings to determine whether levels of aggression can be affected by breeding. One hopes there never will be. In the absence of controlled experimental evidence that aggression is heritable, researchers have instead relied on two main types of research to determine whether our genes can help to cause us become aggressive.

Twin studies Quasi-experimental studies in which similarities in the behaviour of monozygotic (identical) twins are compared to those between other siblings, including dizygotic (non-identical) twins. Behaviours can be seen as heritable if they are shared significantly more among monozygotic twins. Stronger evidence of a genetic component comes from studies of twins reared apart.

The first is a type of correlational study known as a **twin study**. Monozygotic or 'identical' twins have exactly the same genetic makeup because they are the product of the splitting of a single fertilized egg. If aggression is caused partly by genetic variations, then we would expect to find a close relationship between the aggression levels of monozygotic twins. This relationship should be less strong between dizygotic twins and between other siblings, who share less genetic material in common (see Figure 13.2). For example, Raine (1993) studied twins of convicted criminals in the USA. Half of convicts' identical twins, but only one-fifth of their non-identical twins, also had criminal records. Thus, the more genes that twins of convicts have in common, the more likely they are to share their criminality. Many studies produce similarly stronger relationships between the aggression levels of monozygotic twins than dizygotic twins (e.g., Tuvblad, Raine, Zheng & Baker, 2009). A study of 234 Canadian six-year-old twins suggested that physical, but not social, forms of aggression may have a genetic basis (Brendgen et al., 2005). A recent longitudinal study of British and Dutch twins aged 7, 9/10 and 12 showed similarly

strong correlations between monozygotic twins' aggression, and that these correlations remained stable over time (Porsch et al., 2016).

Twin studies suggest that roughly 50 per cent of the variation in human aggression is attributable to our genes (Miles & Carey, 1997). However, this methodology has a number of weaknesses. First, it is hard to pin down cause and effect because twin studies are essentially correlational, relating naturally occurring genetic and behavioural variations to each other. The obvious potential confound or 'third cause' in this research is that genetic similarities normally go hand in hand with environmental similarities. Siblings not only share genetic material but are normally raised in the same households. Identical twins may share exactly the same genetic makeup but also are often treated and even dressed more similarly than other siblings. Although researchers normally attempt some control over these variables, it is difficult and probably impossible in practice to measure and control for all the complex environmental variables that affect our aggression levels as we grow up.

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FIGURE 13.2 Twin studies Twin studies aim to determine whether aggression has a genetic basis.

Some studies attempt to deal with this problem by focusing on twins who were separated at, or soon after, birth. Obviously, twins reared apart may have quite different environments even if they are genetically identical. These studies, too, suggest that the aggression levels of monozygotic twins are more similar than those of less closely related, dizygotic twins. In an early example of such a study, Tellegen et al. (1988) not only observed this result, but also found that the relationship between the self-reported aggression levels of monozygotic twins was equally as strong when they were raised apart as when raised together (see Figure 13.3). They concluded that the environment alone cannot explain aggression. However, these studies also have their problems. Twins reared apart developed in the same womb, within which hormonal exposure to chemicals such as testosterone may have lasting effects on aggression (Ramirez, 2003). Their physical similarity, for example their size and level of physical attractiveness, is likely to mean that they will still be treated more similarly than other sibling pairs (you may recall the effects of physical attractiveness on social judgements in Chapter 3). Also, some meta-analyses have suggested that the apparent effect of genetics is strong in self-reports of aggression, as in questionnaires, but small or nonexistent when aggressive behaviour is observed in the laboratory (Miles & Carey, 1997).

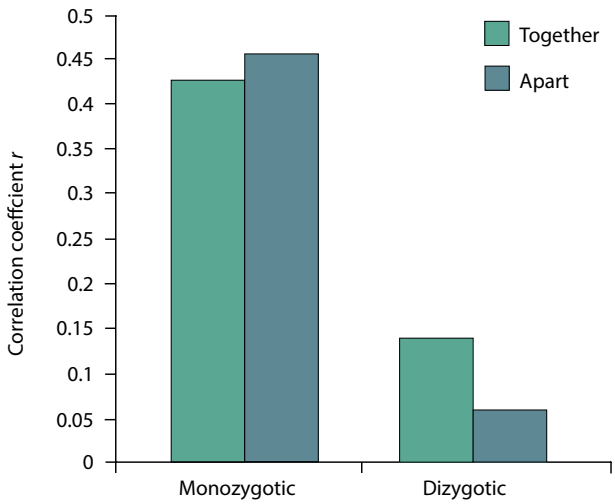

FIGURE 13.3 Strength of correlation between aggression levels in monozygotic and dizygotic twins raised together and apart Monozygotic twins show more similar levels of aggression than dizygotic twins.

Source: Data from Tellegen et al. (1988)

Generally, studies that have attempted to link genes to human behaviour have produced mixed results (Ebstein, 2006). Even if we are prepared to accept that our behaviour is affected by our genes, the relationship is bound to be complicated, normally involving more than one gene, and certainly involving a raft of environmental factors that shape the way our genetics are expressed. However, there is some direct evidence of a genetic

component of aggression in human beings. For example, women with a mutation on a gene known as AP-2 have been found to show increased rates of indirect or social aggression (Damberg, 2005). These findings come from a second type of correlational research, which looks for relationships between genes and behaviours.

Negative urgency The tendency to react impulsively to experiences of negative affect.

Psychopathy A personality disorder characterized by impaired moral conscience, lack of empathy for others and sensitivity to fearful and negative stimuli.

'Warrior gene' A gene responsible for regulating the manufacture of monoamine oxidase A (MAO-A). Some 34 per cent of the population carry this gene, which has been associated with a heightened incidence of psychopathy and aggression among ethnically European samples.

Mutations in a gene called monoamine oxidase A (MAO-A), located on the X chromosome, have received considerable research attention as a possible cause of aggression. This makes some sense because MAO-A acts to effectively 'switch off' neurotransmitters, including serotonin, which control many aspects of our mood and behaviour. For this reason, MAO-A has been found to be related to depression (Yu et al., 2005). Indeed, variations in MAO-A levels in the brain have been linked to increased aggression and delinquency rates in teenagers and young adults (Guo, Ou, Roettger & Shih, 2008).

Although there is some evidence for genetic involvement in aggression, the relationship between genes and human behaviour is generally complicated and rather weak. Also, some research has identified possible third causes. For example, one study showed that MAO-A was also associated with the tendency to react impulsively to experiences of negative affect. This **negative urgency** mediated the relationship between MAO-A and aggression (Chester et al., 2015). Furthermore, the relationship between MAO-A and aggression may be dependent on a number of environmental factors. All these things considered, we should therefore not expect genes to have a strong or straightforward effect on our behaviour. They may have no impact whatsoever, until an environmental trigger comes along (Ebstein, 2006). Some findings suggest that the MAO-A gene interacts with environmental factors to shape human aggression, and authors have even suggested that it may play a role in aggravating the 'cycle of violence', by which maltreated children themselves grow up to be more aggressive adults (see a meta-analysis by Byrd & Manuck, 2014). In one study, a specific variation in the MAO-A gene was found to elevate the chance that maltreated children would go on to develop **psychopathy** (Caspi et al., 2002). Psychopathy is a personality disorder featuring reduced empathy and conscience, and is associated with an increased willingness to exploit and aggress against others. This finding led Gibbons (2004) to label the mutated MAO-A as the **'warrior gene'** (see Figure 13.4). However, Caspi et al. were only able to find this effect of MAO-A among ethnically European participants, and not among other ethnic groups (Crampton & Parkin, 2007).

PHOTOALTO

FIGURE 13.4 Who has the 'warrior gene'? Most if not all the people in this crowd are White. We can therefore expect roughly a third of them to possess the MAO-A gene (Caspi et al., 2002). Yet, there is no evidence in this photograph that members of this crowd are hacking each other to pieces. The extremely high frequency of this gene suggests that it does not deserve to be labelled the 'warrior gene'. Relationships between genes and behaviour are generally inconsistent and dependent upon environmental triggers.

Some controversies surrounding MAO-A research illustrate the social and political implications of explaining human behaviour in terms of genetic influences. The labelling of a specific mutation as 'the warrior gene' is a striking example of how scientific concepts are sometimes 'branded' in vivid ways that capture public attention but overstate their importance. Fully 34 per cent of ethnically White participants have the 'warrior gene' (Caspi et al., 2002), of whom only a small proportion could, presumably, be termed 'warriors'. Nonetheless, this concept has been used successfully to reduce the sentence of a convicted murderer. In the American state of Tennessee, Bradley Waldroup attempted to kill his estranged wife with

a machete and shot dead her friend. The defence argued that because Waldroup had the warrior gene, he should be held less responsible for his crimes. The jury agreed and commuted his sentence from death to 32 years' imprisonment (Barber, 2010). Whatever one thinks about the rights and wrongs of the death penalty, it is remarkable that a jury perceived this man to be less responsible for his crime because he possessed a gene linked so weakly to aggressive behaviour.

There has also been considerable controversy regarding ethnic differences in the incidence of the so-called 'warrior gene'. For example, this gene is more common among the indigenous Maori of New Zealand. In a conference presentation, some researchers commented on this finding and suggested that it might be because of the increased adaptive value of warrior-like behaviour among the Maori as they migrated across the Pacific and established new colonies (Lea, Hall, Green & Chambers, 2005, cited in Lea & Chambers, 2007). The argument is that the aggression encoded by the 'warrior gene' might have become more common among the Maori because those who were more warlike were more likely to survive, and pass on their genes, under these circumstances. This theorizing was based on a sample that included only 46 Maori participants. Unfortunately, this argument was picked up by the media and some politicians as an 'explanation' of elevated offending rates among Maori (Crampton & Parkin, 2007). There is no evidence that links MAO-A mutations to offending rates among Maori (Merriman & Cameron, 2007), and as we have seen, the relationship between these mutations and aggression in other ethnic groups is weak and dependent on environmental factors. The tendency to explain ethnic differences in behaviour in terms of differences in genetic makeup is disturbingly reminiscent of the old-fashioned racism that has been so damaging in world history, as we saw in Chapter 11. Also, any use of genetic information to identify members of a community who may be at risk of committing criminal acts raises a variety of ethical and legal issues (Tamatea, 2015).

Biochemical influences on aggression

Serotonin

The biological approach assumes not only that behaviour is heritable but that it is controlled by chemical processes within the brain and the wider body. Indeed, it turns out that aggression is influenced by endocrinological processes. Deficits in the levels or the neural uptake of **serotonin**, a key neurochemical, have been repeatedly linked to aggression in both animals and humans. Correlational studies examining levels of chemicals in the blood, urine or cerebrospinal fluid show that human beings who have chronically low levels of serotonin activity are more prone to aggression (Berman, Tracy & Coccaro, 1997; Moore, Scarpa & Raine, 2002). Evidence of causality is provided by experiments. For example, tryptophan is an amino acid found in protein-rich foods such as cheese, soya beans, sesame and sunflower seeds, which is used by the body to manufacture serotonin. If people are deprived of dietary sources of tryptophan, their serotonin levels drop, causing them to be more aggressive (Bjork, Dougherty, Moeller, Cherek & Swann, 1999; Bond, Wingrove & Critchlow, 2001).

Serotonin A monoamine neurotransmitter found in the gut, blood and central nervous systems of humans and other animals. It is involved in the regulation of sleep, appetite and mood. Depressed levels or function of serotonin are associated with increased levels of aggression.

Drugs that affect serotonin also have an immediate impact on aggressive behaviour. Berman, McCloskey, Fanning, Schumacher and Coccaro (2009) gave groups of previously aggressive and non-aggressive participants either a placebo or a dose of paroxetine, a drug that increases serotonin activity. Participants in both groups were provoked by a fictitious confederate who gave them increasingly intense electric shocks as part of a competitive reaction time game. Later, participants were given an opportunity to retaliate by delivering shocks back to the confederate. The drug had little effect on participants who did not have a history of significant aggression in their lives – these participants seldom retaliated, so there was no scope for the drug to make a difference. However, among those with a previous history of aggression, the paroxetine had a dramatic effect. Those who received the paroxetine dose were much less likely to retaliate, giving fewer than one-third as many shocks at the end of the experiment than those given the placebo. Intriguingly, a low status or 'subdominant' social position seems to reduce serotonin activity, in both animals and humans (Manuck, Flory, Ferrell & Muldoon, 2004). Serotonin

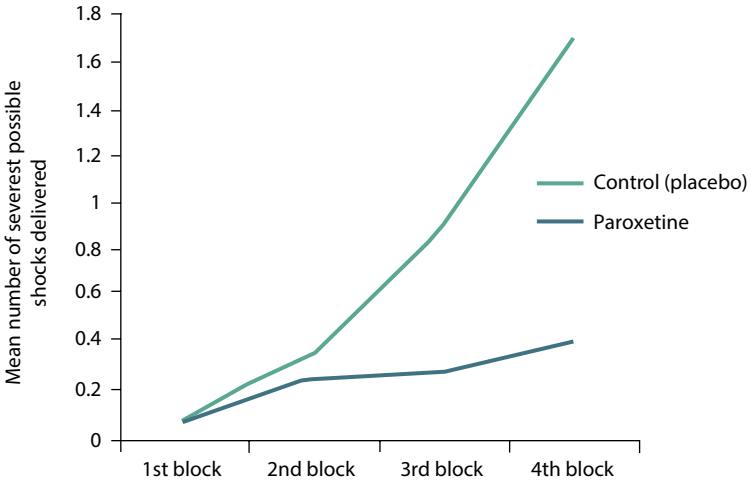

FIGURE 13.5 Serotonin activity and aggression The mean number of times participants administered the severest possible shock to a confederate who had been shocking them with increasing intensity over blocks of trials is shown as a function of the capsule that participants had taken. It contained either paroxetine, a drug that activates serotonin activity and is theoretically expected to inhibit aggressive responding, or no psychoactive components. These results were obtained from participants who were already prone to aggression at baseline. The provocation did not elicit aggressive responses from participants who were not already aggressive so it was impossible to test whether paroxetine inhibits aggression among such people.

Source: Berman et al. (2009)

depletion may therefore be a kind of signal that there is little to lose, that it is worth taking a risk by aggressing in order to try to improve one's position (see Figure 13.5).

A more recent **systematic review** and meta-analysis, however, calls into question the strength of the link between serotonin and aggression. Duke, Bègue, Bell and Eisenlohr-Moul (2013) analysed the results of 175 studies which together showed only a small correlation of $r = -.12$. Whilst this is consistent with the established finding (i.e., decreased levels of serotonin are associated with increased aggression), according to convention, a small effect size is .10, medium is .30 and a large effect size is .50. Therefore, the amount of variance in aggression that is explained by decreases in serotonin is quite limited. Duke et al. argue that improved serotonin and aggression measures need to be established, and the contribution of additional factors (e.g., personality and environmental factors) need to be addressed.

Testosterone

Systematic review A review of research on a topic using a rigorous and clearly outlined methodology in both the search for, and selection of, studies.

Testosterone A steroid hormone found in both sexes of many animals, but in amounts roughly ten times higher in men than in women. It is associated with increased bone and muscle mass. Studies suggest it may be associated with increased risk taking, selfishness and aggression.

Men are more likely to engage in acts of serious physical aggression than women (Bjorkqvist, 1994), and have much higher levels of **testosterone**. Research suggests that this could be more than coincidence – aggression really can be heightened, if not literally 'fuelled', by this chemical (Archer, 1991). Individuals who are chronically high in testosterone report stronger feelings of tension and agitation, are more aggressive and are more likely to be in prison for unprovoked violent crimes (Book, Starzyk & Quinsey, 2001). However, the perennial question – does X cause Y, or Y cause X? – is posed by a number of studies that suggest that aggression is associated with testosterone.

One line of studies shows that levels of testosterone rise when men win competitive encounters, and drop when they lose. Mazur and Lamb (1980) found that testosterone levels rose in men as a result of winning a doubles tennis match, and receiving a university degree. Similar results were observed in further studies of men (e.g., Booth, Shelley, Mazur, Tharp & Kittok, 1989) and other animals engaging in competitive encounters, including sparrows (Wingfield, 1985), mice (Leshner, 1983), fish (Hannes, Franck & Liemann, 1984) and monkeys (Bernstein, Rose, Gordon & Grady, 2006; see Carré & Olmstead, 2015 for an overview of the bidirectional relationship between testosterone and competition/aggresson).

However, research also suggests that among humans, who have higher cognitive capacities than other animals, the link between winning and elevated testosterone is not a direct one. Gonzalez-Bono, Salvador, Serrano and Ricarte (1999) found that after a match between two professional basketball teams, testosterone only increased if the winners made internal attributions for their victory, assigning credit to themselves rather than to external circumstances.

Experimental research on animals has shown that if testosterone levels are artificially increased under controlled conditions, increases in aggression will follow (e.g., Bronson & Desjardins, 1968; DeBold & Miczek, 1985). However, the case is less clear with humans. Abusers of anabolic steroids offer uncontrolled but naturally occurring experiments – steroids mimic the function of testosterone and users report increases in aggressive feelings (Perry, Anderson &

Yates, 1990). However, people have expectations about the drugs they are taking, which can result in placebo effects. Bjorkqvist, Nygren, Bjorkland and Bjorkqvist (1994) found that men given testosterone over a one-week period showed no increase in feelings of anger, irritation, impulsivity or frustration relative to a group given placebo pills.

As always, it is hard to interpret experimental results that are null (i.e., show no effects) or inconsistent. We should not necessarily conclude that testosterone does not cause aggression in people. It is possible that testosterone is already at such a level in males that introducing more testosterone does not make much of a difference (Anderson, Bancroft & Wu, 1992). Indeed, it is possible that administering testosterone to men experimentally causes their bodies to produce less testosterone, undermining the attempt to experimentally alter levels of testosterone in the body (Bjorkqvist et al., 1994). Alternatively, it may be that testosterone affects aggression by changing the development of the nervous system over the long term (Bronson & Desjardins, 1968), more than by inducing immediate behavioural effects.

Although the jury is out on the role testosterone plays in aggression, it is often cited as a factor that may cause gender differences in aggression (Archer, 1991, 2009). Meta-analyses of hundreds of studies show that men and boys are more likely to engage in physical aggression than women and girls (e.g., Card, Stucky, Sawalani & Little, 2008). Roughly ten times more murders are committed by men than by women (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz & Osterman, 2002). Approximately 97 per cent of murders in which offender and victim are the same sex involve men, meaning that only 3 per cent involve women (Daly & Wilson, 1990). However, men and boys do not appear to be any more prone than women to social aggression (Card et al., 2008). Also, the role of testosterone in higher rates of male physical aggression is unclear (Archer, 1991). Other factors such as men's greater strength, impulsivity and social understandings of gender roles may also play a role. For example, Crick, Bigbee and Howes (1996) found that children viewed physical aggression as normal outlets of anger among boys, but social aggression as a normal outlet for girls.

EXPLORING FURTHER

The Y chromosome is possessed by roughly one half of the human population (that is, males). Research has shown that males are more prone to aggression than females, therefore the Y chromosome is clearly related to aggression. Compare this to the much weaker relationship between aggression and possession of the MAO-A or 'warrior gene' on the X chromosome that we read about earlier. Should we call the Y chromosome the 'warrior chromosome'? Should men being tried for murder be able to plead diminished responsibility because they possess the Y chromosome? If you are interested in reading more about this topic, we recommend you search the Internet with the key terms 'genetic determinism' and 'responsibility'.

Neuroanatomical influences on aggression

Another line of evidence that biology matters comes from studies on the structure of the brain. If it is possible to show that structures in the brain are specialized for aggression, then there is evidence that humans and other animals have been hard-wired with a propensity to aggress. In a series of studies conducted during the 1950s and 60s, Yale University researcher Jose Delgado used electrical stimulation of specific brain regions (usually the hypothalamus) to achieve more and more refined control over the aggressive responses of monkeys and cats. By the mid-1960s, Delgado (1967) had successfully created what might be termed 'remote-controlled monkeys', whose aggressive and defensive responses could be controlled by means of remote-controlled electrodes in their brains. It even seemed that monkeys could control each other – a small monkey, for example, was able to 'turn off' a larger animal when it began

to display aggressive tendencies. In a notorious, showman-like demonstration of the power of brain stimulation, Delgado put himself in a ring with a charging bull and stopped its charge with one of his remote-controlled devices.

People are not immune from this technique of brain control (Blank, 2005). A psychiatrist narrowly escaped injury after his client became enraged and smashed her guitar after she had received painless electrical stimulation in the amygdala (Moyer, 1976). However, more recently evolved brain structures such as the prefrontal cortex can sometimes step in, saving us from enacting the aggressive impulses being suggested by brainstem and limbic systems deep in our brains. Notably, studies using positron emission tomography scanning suggest that the prefrontal cortex is significantly less active in murderers and other violent offenders than in the general population (e.g., Davidson, Putnam & Larson, 2000; Raine, Buchsbaum & LaCasse, 1997).

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Alcohol and aggression

In many countries over the past decade or two, a blaze of publicity has surrounded the problem of alcohol-fuelled aggression in town centres. How real is this concern? Well, if you are looking for a statistically powerful cause of aggression, look no further than alcohol. Here are some statistics that are staggering in more than one sense of the word. According to the best estimates of many studies, at least two-thirds of all murders, at least half of sexual offences, and around half of all domestic violence offences perpetrated by men against their spouses are committed under the influence of alcohol (e.g., Bègue & Subra, 2008; Roizen, 1997). This is not just correlation, it is also causation – any number of experimental studies have shown that having participants drink alcohol makes them more aggressive (e.g., Taylor & Gammon, 1975). If we were to eliminate the consumption of alcohol, it is clear that undreamt-of reductions in violence would follow. If we were to limit or control its consumption more effectively, it is clear that substantial reductions could also be achieved. Ideally, campaigns to reduce alcohol consumption should be targeted at those most at risk of aggressing. Those who are aggressive even when they are sober are more likely to drink heavily (Gustafson, 1994). And when they do drink, alcohol has an especially powerful effect on their aggression (Bailey & Taylor, 1991). Unfortunately, big men, who are capable of doing the most damage to others, are also most prone to becoming aggressive when they drink. One pair of experiments showed that smaller men's aggression levels are less affected by the consumption of alcohol. So, watch out for 'the big, the bad, and the boozed-up', as the researchers colourfully put it (DeWall, Bushman, Giancola & Webster, 2010).

How does alcohol exert such a massive effect on aggression? It is a complex drug and works in many ways. It seems to interact with testosterone – mice and

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human beings with high testosterone levels are especially prone to the effects of alcohol (DeBold & Miczek, 1985). It can also interact with other drugs, such as the party drug flunitrazepam – mice and rats given combinations of alcohol and this drug were especially aggressive (de Almeida, Saft, Rosa & Miczek, 2010). Alcohol also works to impair the function of the prefrontal cortex, meaning that people fall victim to 'alcohol myopia' (Steele & Josephs, 1990). This is an inability to control their behaviour, linked to a failure of imagination – people cannot foresee the consequences of their behaviour. Undoubtedly, there are biochemical pathways, meaning that we can see the influence of alcohol on aggression as being consistent

with the biological approach. However, this is not quite the whole story.

For one thing, it is not always necessary to actually drink alcohol; sometimes, it is enough merely to think that one has drunk it. There is a small but apparently significant placebo effect across studies – if people take a drink that contains no alcohol but are told it is alcoholic, they will tend to be more aggressive (Exum, 2006). This effect may be larger when experiments are carefully designed to disentangle the effect of real and 'pretend' alcohol. Bègue et al. (2009) gave one-third of male participants a non-alcoholic drink, one-third a moderately alcoholic drink and one-third a highly alcoholic drink. Within each of these experimental conditions, one-third of participants were told they were drinking a non-alcoholic drink that tasted alcoholic, one-third were told they were drinking a moderately alcoholic drink, and the rest were told they were drinking a highly alcoholic drink. In the placebo (no-alcohol) conditions, the rims of the glasses were sprayed with a trace of alcohol to ensure that all drinks tasted alcoholic. As in several previous studies, aggression was measured by the amount of hot spice and salt that participants gave to a confederate as part of a taste test. In this set-up, aggression was affected by what participants believed they had drunk, not what they had actually consumed. Thus, the beliefs, and the culture, that surround alcohol seem to be an important determinant of its effects on behaviour. Indeed, being primed with alcohol-related words on a computer screen appears to activate the concept of aggression, making aggression-related words easier to identify (Bartholow & Heinz, 2006). Even showing alcohol-related imagery to children who have not yet consumed alcohol increases the likelihood that they will subsequently aggress in a laboratory task (Brown, Coyne, Barlow & Qualter, 2010).

All this means that it will not be enough merely to control the consumption of alcohol, although this must be an important part of the story. It is also going to be necessary to change the way that people think about alcohol and its effects. A big problem is that people associate alcohol with aggression. Indeed, qualitative interviews of untreated heavy drinkers in the West Midlands repeatedly showed that these 'problem' drinkers thought that alcohol was very much to blame for violent conduct (Rolfe et al., 2006). Another qualitative study, this time involving men who had been involved in violence in pubs and bars in England, also revealed a strong cultural equation of alcohol and violence. In the words of one participant in the study: 'It feels like you're drinking testosterone by the glass, liquid strength or something. You just feel invincible when you're really hammered or drunk, I guess' (Graham & Wells, 2003, p. 551).

Questions

1. Many public campaigns designed to reduce problem drinking among young people link alcohol to violence. See if you can find an example by searching 'alcohol' and 'violence' using Google or a similar search engine. Do you think these campaigns might backfire? How?
2. In a few sentences, outline an experiment designed to test your idea.
3. See if you can find articles examining whether these campaigns do backfire. How do your intuitions compare with the results of these studies? Also, how similar were the studies reported to your own?
4. There are many other drugs besides alcohol that are readily available. Conduct a literature search on links between other drugs and aggression. What are the similarities and differences?

EXPLORING FURTHER

What are your alcohol expectancies? Complete Fromme, Stroot and Kaplan's (1993) measure of alcohol expectancy, called CEOA (short for Comprehensive Effects of Alcohol). Have a friend or family member complete it too, and compare your responses. This scale has seven subscales. Items 1–7 refer to sociability, 8–10 tension reduction, 11–15 liquid courage, 16–19 sexuality, 20–28 impairment, 29–33 risk and aggression, 34–37 self-perception. Calculate your mean for each subscale (add up the scores for each item, and divide by the number of items in each subscale). How do they compare to those of others? Although Fromme et al. (1993) do not report means of each subscale, you could find out what means arise from studies that have since used it (if you are interested, use a search engine or database).

If I were under the influence of drinking alcohol:

1 I would act sociably	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
2 It would be easier to talk to people	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
3 I would be friendly	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
4 I would be talkative	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
5 I would be outgoing	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
6 It would be easier to express feelings	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
7 I would be energetic	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
8 I would feel calm	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
9 I would feel peaceful	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
10 My body would feel relaxed	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
11 I would feel courageous	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
12 I would feel brave and daring	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
13 I would feel unafraid	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
14 I would feel powerful	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
15 I would feel creative	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
16 I would be a better lover	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
17 I would enjoy sex more	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
18 I would feel sexy	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
19 It would be easier to act out my fantasies	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
20 I would be clumsy	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
21 I would feel dizzy	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
22 My head would feel fuzzy	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
23 My responses would be slow	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
24 I would have difficulty thinking	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
25 My writing would be impaired	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
26 I would feel shaky or jittery the next day	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
27 My senses would be dulled	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
28 I would neglect my obligations	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
29 I would take risks	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
30 I would act aggressively	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
31 I would be loud, boisterous, or noisy	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
32 I would act tough	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
33 I would feel dominant	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
34 I would feel moody	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
35 I would feel guilty	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
36 I would feel self-critical	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree
37 My problems would seem worse	disagree	1	2	3	4	agree

Note: The CEOA also asks participants to evaluate each of these effects (on a five-point scale, where 1 = bad, 3 = neutral, 5 = good). This feature of the CEOA is not found in other measures of alcohol expectancies. For the sake of brevity, we have not included it here.

Source: Fromme et al. (1993). Copyright © 1993 by the American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

THE SOCIAL ANIMAL: SOCIAL CAUSES OF AGGRESSION

It is clear by now that human biology plays an important role in aggression. However, researchers studying aggression from a biological perspective would seldom argue that biology is the only important dimension. Social factors – variables that arise from our social relationships with others and the social situations in which we find ourselves – are also important. Some of the social factors we are about to consider are also experienced by other animals (e.g., frustration, heat, crowding and pain), whereas others appear to be unique to humans (e.g., the perception of relative deprivation and injustice).

Self-esteem and narcissism

As we saw in Chapter 2, self-esteem can be considered a social rather than a purely personality variable. It reflects, and is affected by, the quality of our relationships with other people. Findings of correlational studies attempting to link self-esteem to aggression have been mixed (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Different facets of self-esteem, which are themselves positively related to each other precisely because they are dimensions of self-esteem, may have opposite effects on aggression.

This point was demonstrated by Kirkpatrick, Waugh, Valencia and Webster (2002). They examined two aspects of self-esteem: self-perceived superiority (feeling better than others) and social inclusion (number of positive social relationships). Participants high in self-perceived superiority were more likely to aggress against a confederate who had marked their essay harshly. Participants high in social inclusion were less likely to aggress against the confederate. These opposing effects of the two aspects of self-esteem could be detected when each was considered separately. However, no relation between overall self-esteem and aggression was found, because the different aspects of self-esteem were effectively cancelling each other out. Interestingly, Kirkpatrick et al. found that the relationship of the different aspects of self-esteem to aggression occurred over and above the effects of narcissism, which was also measured in their study. Finally, the relationship between self-esteem and aggression may be different among different people. For example, Taylor, Davis-Kean and Malanchuk (2007) found that although low self-esteem (specifically relating to achievement at school) was related to aggression among most of the children in their study, a minority of the children showed aggression in response to threats to high self-esteem.

In recent decades, some researchers have argued that we can expect to find only weak or mixed relationships between normal self-esteem and aggression. Other factors such as emotion dysregulation (i.e., the inability to control emotional responses to provocative stimuli; Garofalo, Holden, Zeigler-Hill & Velotti, 2015) and anger rumination (i.e., the tendency to focus on angry moods and experiences; Turner & White, 2015) may play significant roles too. However, what may really matter is a particularly elevated but insecure form of self-esteem known as narcissism (e.g., Baumeister, Smart & Boden, 1996). Narcissists display a positive, even boastful self-image but tend to have implicit doubts about their worth. As a result, they go to great lengths to obtain positive feedback from others and respond to criticism or other threats to their self-image with hostility.

Bushman and Baumeister (1998) did indeed find that participants who scored highly on a measure of narcissism were more likely to aggress. Participants wrote a pro-life or pro-choice essay on the topic of abortion. They were then given negative feedback, ostensibly from another participant, such as: 'This is one of the worst essays I have read!' Later, they were asked to deliver blasts of noise to the person they thought had given them this negative feedback, or another participant – whoever was slower to answer a series of

questions. Crucially, the participant was able to adjust the level of the noise, between 60 dB and 105 dB. The latter level of noise is very unpleasant indeed, although short bursts are not dangerous. Narcissistic participants gave the person they thought had criticized their essay louder bursts of noise. They did not give the other participant louder bursts of noise any more than non-narcissistic participants. This suggests that narcissism leads to aggression that is directed squarely at people who threaten the self-image, and does not lead to **displaced aggression**. However, this experiment gave participants a clear choice to vent their aggression either at the person who had slighted them or an innocent third party. More recent findings suggest that narcissists will indeed be more likely to aggress against innocent people when they are unable to retaliate against the person who provoked them (Reidy, Foster & Zeichner, 2010). Also, Martinez, Zeichner, Reidy and Miller (2008) found that narcissists would deliver stronger shocks to innocent confederates after having received negative feedback on their writing skills by a computer. Indeed, such participants were especially likely to deliver shocks to innocent confederates when they were expecting to receive feedback from the computer but did not know what it contained. Apparently, narcissists may use aggression to boost their self-image when it is threatened, even against people who have not insulted them, and even when they only *anticipate* that they *might* be insulted. The relationship between narcissism and aggression appears to be robust. A systematic review and meta-analysis of 25 samples found support for the association in both clinical and nonclinical populations (Lambe, Hamilton-Giachrtsis, Garner & Walker (2018), so it is not simply an artefact of studying violent or non-violent participants. Research also suggests that people can be narcissistic about their groups, as well as themselves, and respond aggressively to threats to the positive image of their group (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka & Bilewicz, 2013; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, Eidelson & Jayawickreme, 2009; Golec de Zavala, Peker, Guerra & Baran, 2016).

Displaced aggression Aggression that is aroused by one source but directed at another.

Cues in the social environment

One of the earliest and simplest accounts of human aggression is the frustration-aggression hypothesis. **Frustration** occurs when an individual is prevented from achieving a goal they are pursuing. For Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer and Sears (1939), who pioneered this hypothesis, frustration will always lead to some type of aggression, and conversely, all acts of aggression stem from the frustration of a goal. If you remember what you read in Chapter 1, scientific alarm bells should already be ringing – any psychological principle that does not allow for exceptions is setting itself up for a fall. Nonetheless, there is plenty of evidence that frustration does facilitate aggression, especially if one or more of the following applies (Miller, 1941):

Frustration An aversive state that is triggered when individuals are prevented from achieving a goal they are pursuing.

- The individual anticipated that they would feel satisfied when they achieved the goal.
- The frustration is total, so that all hope of achieving the goal is lost.
- The individual is frustrated more than once.
- The individual was frustrated when they had nearly achieved their goal.

Later research allowed scientists to better predict when frustration does, and does not, cause aggression. As is so often the case with people, causal attribution – the perceived cause of the frustration, in this case – is of central importance. This was demonstrated in a classic experiment by Burnstein and Worschel (1962). They had participants work together to solve problems in groups. Eventually, a male confederate planted in the group caused it to fail the task because he had not taken in some important information. Whether or not aggression followed depended on the ostensible cause for the confederate's frustrating behaviour – it did, if he 'wasn't paying attention', and it did not, if his 'hearing aid failed'. What seemed to matter was whether the person's frustrating behaviour was controllable.

Aversive condition Any condition that an organism finds unpleasant and seeks to avoid, modify or escape where possible. An array of aversive conditions have been shown to trigger aggressive responses.

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Still later, other research suggested why frustration so often triggers aggression – it is unpleasant to be frustrated. Technically, frustration can be described as an **aversive condition**, and any number of 'aversive conditions' have been linked to aggression. These include uncomfortable levels of heat, the feeling of being crowded and physical pain (Berkowitz, 1982). These will cause animals and humans to lash out. For example, Berkowitz (1982) had an experimental group of participants keep their hand in cold water, which, after a while, becomes very painful. Compared to the luckier control participants who had their hands in lukewarm water, they were more prone to subject confederates who annoyed them to loud blasts of noise. Also, the effect of heat on aggression is rather powerful. Extrapolating from the results of earlier experiments (Anderson, Deuser & DeNeve, 1995), Anderson, Bushman and Groom (1997) calculated that predicted increases in temperature due to global warming would result in more than 100,000 extra serious assaults per year in the USA alone by 2050. Hsiang, Burke and Miguel (2013) analysed the literature on climate and human conflict, focusing on a range of conflicts, such as crime, interpersonal and intergroup violence, and political instability, over many centuries. Across all world regions, they found that deviations from normal temperature and rainfall increased (often substantially) the risk of conflict. Further, their meta-analysis of studies conducted since 1950 showed that for each standard deviation increase in temperature, or more extreme rainfall, the frequency of interpersonal violence increased by 4 per cent and intergroup conflict increased by 14 per cent.

Why does practically any aversive condition appear to have the power to elicit aggression? We have already touched upon one reason – it makes some evolutionary sense (Malamuth & Addison, 2001). To survive and thrive, organisms need to be able to escape from or transform dire situations; fighting their way out of them may be an appropriate response. Another reason was presented by Berkowitz's (1990) cognitive neoassociation model. For Berkowitz (1990), aversive conditions will trigger aggression when they help make people angry. This emotion is associated in people's minds with aggression, and makes the possibility of aggressive responses more salient to them. Thus, they are more prone to aggress, without necessarily thinking through the consequences. This is a form of automatic social cognition, with potentially disastrous effects.

Indeed, some research suggests that the mere cognitive availability of aggressive responses can make people more prone to aggress. In a famous but controversial study, Berkowitz and LePage (1967) found that the presence of a gun in a room can make people more aggressive. In

a later study, Berkowitz (1988) showed boys a clip of a violent ice hockey game (as if there were any other type), in which some of the players were wearing toy radios. Boys were subsequently more aggressive if a similar walkie-talkie was in the room with them. The object appeared to cue the possibility of violence akin to that the boys had just seen.

Hostile attribution bias

In Chapter 3 we encountered attribution theory, an influential model of social cognition, which suggests that our emotional and behavioural reactions to events are determined by the causes we perceive to underlie them. From this perspective, Dodge (1986) and Crick and Dodge (1994) argued that errors in attribution may underpin much aggressive behaviour. According to their model, responding appropriately to people's behaviour requires an effective attribution process. When someone knocks into you, there is a good chance it is an accident. When someone pulls a face, it may have nothing to do with you. If you interpret these ambiguous situations as evidence that their intentions are hostile, there is a much greater chance that you will form the intention to retaliate. Indeed, many studies show that aggressive people are prone to the **hostile attribution bias**, seeing innocent or ambiguous behaviours by other people (e.g., bumping into you) as deliberate acts of provocation (Orobio de Castro, Veerman, Koops, Bosch & Monshouwer, 2002; Pornari & Wood, 2010). Longitudinal studies have shown that if children at age 5 are predisposed to interpreting ambiguous behaviours in this way, they are more likely to be aggressive 12 years after (Lansford et al., 2006). Although findings are mixed, a meta-analysis of many studies found that the effect is reliable, and is bigger in studies where participants are in an actual social interaction rather than reflecting on a hypothetical situation (Orobio de Castro et al., 2002).

Hostile attribution bias The tendency to view innocent or ambiguous behaviours by other people as deliberate acts of provocation.

EXPLORING FURTHER

The following scenario is adapted from a study of hostile attribution bias in French youths by Bègue and Muller (2006). Read it and complete the questions. You might also want to try it on family or friends you think are relatively placid or aggressive. You could also create your own scenarios.

You are about to sit down on a spare seat at a table in the university cafe to eat some lunch. As you do so, someone at the table says: 'You can't sit here, that seat is taken.'

1. **On a scale from 0 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely), how likely is it that what the person said is false – that the seat really isn't taken?**
2. **On the same scale, how likely is it that the person's intention towards you was hostile?**

The higher your scores, the more you might be prone to the hostile attribution bias. Of course, this is a hypothetical task. As we have just seen, the correlation between aggression and the hostile attribution bias is stronger when people are confronted with actual ambiguous situations. Why do you think this is? Read the paper by Orobio de Castro et al. (2002) and related works on the hostile attribution bias in real-life situations to find out why.

Relative deprivation and perceived injustice

Another powerful social trigger of aggression is **relative deprivation** – the perception that, relative to others, one is not receiving good treatment or experiencing desired outcomes (Crosby, 1976; Smith & Kim, 2007). Relative deprivation is especially aversive when it is perceived as unjust. Although there is surprisingly little experimental research into the effects of relative deprivation on interpersonal aggression, it is widely linked by social scientists to the incidence of crime and forms of intergroup aggression such as terrorism, as we shall see (Moghaddam, 2005). Relative deprivation is also linked to increases in behaviours such as theft (Hennigan et al., 1982) and gambling (Callan, Ellard, Shead & Hodgins, 2008), which may, like aggression, appear to present a 'way out' of disadvantage.

Relative deprivation The perception that, relative to others, one is not receiving good treatment or experiencing desired outcomes.

Ironically, the human love of justice often provides a powerful motive to aggress. Legal punishments such as fines and imprisonments can be seen as acts of aggression, in that they are acts designed to harm offenders. Indeed, people seem to be most satisfied with legal punishments that are seen as 'just deserts' for those who have done wrong, in keeping with the biblical proverb 'An eye for an eye' (Darley, Carlsmith & Robinson, 2000). Similarly, those who murder, assault or verbally abuse others often appear to have been motivated, in part, to punish them for their wrongdoing (Tedeschi & Quigley, 1996). People who are chronically concerned with justice, and who react with negative emotions to injustice, are also more prone to aggress against people they perceive to be wrongdoers (Gollwitzer, Rothmund, Pfeiffer & Ensenbach, 2009). Justice-driven aggression is not necessarily motivated simply by the desire to see the wrongdoer suffer for their sins, however. It is perhaps more important that wrongdoers get the message and understand why they are being punished. Seeing victims get the message is more satisfying than seeing them suffer (Gollwitzer & Denzler, 2009).

Learning aggression from others

Aggression is not just triggered by cues in the environment but can be learned from observation of others. Bandura's highly influential **social learning theory** offered the first explanation of this phenomenon. This theory emerged as the so-called 'cognitive revolution' was moving psychology away from a behaviourist period to take into account mental processes. For Bandura, a key concept was vicarious conditioning – we learn not only by being rewarded and punished for our behaviour, but also by observing others being rewarded and punished for theirs. Thus, if a person appears to enjoy themselves while committing aggressive acts, or is otherwise rewarded for doing so, and if they escape punishment, observers learn that it might also be safe and rewarding to aggress themselves. Bandura, Ross and Ross (1961) illustrated this point with a set of studies in which children watched an adult pound an inflatable 'Bobo' doll with their fists, feet and weapons. When children were later frustrated and given access to a similar doll, they copied the aggressive behaviour they had just seen. Not only did watching the aggression make the children more aggressive, but they frequently copied the specific forms and 'catchphrases' of the aggressive model, who in some conditions had verbally taunted the unfortunate doll during the aggressive acts.

Social learning theory Theory that people learn from one another, through observation and imitation.

These studies have been criticized on various grounds, most tellingly by Tedeschi and Quigley (1996), who pointed out that as far as the children were concerned, they might well have been engaging in harmless play. If they do not intend to commit harm, their behaviour does not count as aggression. However, these studies and Bandura's theoretical edifice called attention to the point that aggression is all too often learned and copied from others. Indeed, children who witness domestic violence between their parents are more likely to assault their own partners when they grow up (Foshee, Bauman & Fletcher, 1999). Oliver Stone's 1994 film *Natural Born Killers* has been the target of a lawsuit after it was apparently the basis of a 'copycat' killing (Boyle, 2001). Two 18-year-olds from Oklahoma, Sarah Edmondson and Ben Darrus, went out with a .38 calibre handgun and shot two strangers after having repeatedly watched the film while high on LSD. This is but one case of many that has been attributed to learned, copycat violence (Kunich, 2000; see Helfgott, 2015 for a review).

Of course, it is impossible to explain, with any certainty, individual cases of copycat violence in terms of social learning theory. These cases almost certainly were caused by additional factors. Berkowitz's (1990) cognitive neoassociation model, for example, would suggest that violence simply becomes more salient to people as a possible response when they have witnessed it repeatedly. People may be more prone to the hostile attribution bias – seeing aggressive intent when it is not there – when they have seen many instances of deliberate violence (Crick & Dodge, 1994). However, some findings do provide additional support for social learning theory. For example, Perry, Perry and Rasmussen (1986) found that more aggressive children reported that they felt able to engage in aggression and that it would bring them rewards. Some of the findings we will encounter soon about the effect of sporting outcomes on violence among spectators also provide some support for social learning theory.

TIME TO REFLECT

Are the findings of Perry et al. (1986) consistent only with social learning theory? What else would be needed for this study to provide strong support for social learning theory?

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Measuring aggression in the laboratory

As we have just seen, Bandura et al.'s (1961) Bobo doll studies have been heavily criticized for measuring aggression in an unrealistic and invalid way. For the most part, researchers of aggression are attempting to explain real-world cases of physical or social aggression that have real and important consequences. But for ethical reasons, it is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to allow participants to really hurt each other, or risk really hurting each other, in the laboratory. You will not find laboratory experiments in which the dependent measure is the number of punches that participants throw at each other. The importance of ensuring that participants do not come to serious harm is one factor that prevents researchers from accurately simulating real-life forms of aggression.

Another obstacle to the realistic study of aggression in the laboratory is that 'normal' participants are often reluctant to aggress unless features of the situation clearly make aggression seem an available and acceptable response. Many laboratory studies are set up so that participants are not only allowed but actually required to deliver some aversive stimulus to the targets of aggression. Very often, the set-up is that the participant is supposed to 'train' the target of aggression by punishing them with an aversive stimulus when they give a wrong answer. The participants are often given access to some apparatus that is expressly designed to deliver these aversive stimuli. These include the delivery of electric shocks, loud noises and hot chilli sauces of mild to severe intensity. The measure of aggression is effectively a measure of participants' willingness to inflict nastier experiences than necessary on a person in their fulfilment of a role that already requires them to impose some nasty experiences.

This lack of realism casts a pall over laboratory studies of aggression. Some laboratory studies get around the problem by measuring angry feelings, intentions or physiological responses that are known 'precursors of aggression'. These studies are clever and important, but the question that must hang over them is whether the laboratory simulations would translate into violence in everyday life. As in all areas of social psychology, but perhaps more so than some, the experimental study of aggression is only viable when it is done as part of a wider research programme that includes other research methods, including observational and archival studies, field experiments and surveys. The study of media violence, which we discuss shortly, is an excellent example.

Questions

1. Using a search engine or database, find an example of an article that reports experiments using each of these dependent variables in the study of aggression: electric shocks, loud noises and chilli sauce.
2. Find an example of an experiment cited in this chapter that uses measures of angry feelings and/or physiological arousal.
3. Propose a measure of aggression, suitable for use in a laboratory, that is ethically acceptable but has not been used in a study before. It might help you to think of how you would measure aggression if freed from all ethical constraints, and then to think about how you could capture the essence of that measure in an ethically acceptable way – one in which participants are not at risk of harm.

Media effects

One of the hottest debates in popular culture over the past 50 years or so has been the link between media violence and aggression. Does exposure to media violence really lead to increased levels of violence? Although the debate rages on TV, in the press and

the blogosphere, and academics from some other fields of enquiry remain sceptical (e.g., Trend, 2007), social psychological research has uncovered abundant evidence for a causal relationship (Bushman & Anderson, 2001). In their review of the literature, Bushman and Anderson point out that the observed link between media violence and aggression, in meta-analytic studies, is two to three times as strong as the link between homework and academic achievement, and exposure to lead and IQ scores in children. One study estimated that, at the end of the 1980s, the average 13-year-old American child had witnessed 100,000 violent acts on TV (Huston et al., 1992). Some researchers suggest that the relationship between exposure to violent media material and violent behaviour may be getting stronger, perhaps in part because of the advent of increasingly realistic special effects in films and computer games (Bushman & Cantor, 2003). Further, although correlations are always to be questioned – violent kids may gravitate to violent films and games, for example – there are any number of experiments showing that exposure to media violence causes increases in aggressive behaviour (Bushman & Cantor, 2003), and that repeated play increases aggression over time (Hasan, Bègue, Scharkow & Bushman, 2013).

Getty Images/Array

Thus, 'research has shifted from whether media priming exists to how media priming works' (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen & Carpentier, 2002, p. 97). Some meta-analyses show that the effect linking the consumption of media violence to aggression is larger than many of the effects that grip the public imagination, such as the effect of homework on academic achievement, or passive smoking in the workplace and lung cancer (Bushman & Huesmann, 2006; Huesmann, 2007) (see Figure 13.6). Further, a meta-analysis by Greitemeyer and Mügge (2014) found support for the video game-aggression link across 98 studies. Findings from correlational, experimental and longitudinal studies support the robustness of the link, and also suggest that there are both immediate and long-term effects of playing violent video games.

However, it has been argued more recently that the relationship between violent video game use and aggression in *children* might not be very strong. Ferguson (2015) argued that many of

the studies linking video game use and aggression have focused on university student samples and are therefore quite limited in what they can tell us about the effects on children. In a meta-analysis of 101 studies that focused solely on children and adolescents, Ferguson found only small negative effects of violent video games across these studies. The relationship between game use and aggression was only $r = .06$, and there was also little evidence that violent games harmed children in other ways (e.g., academic performance and depression). The debate therefore continues on this hot topic. Perhaps unsurprinsgly, it also remains an active area of research in social psychology.

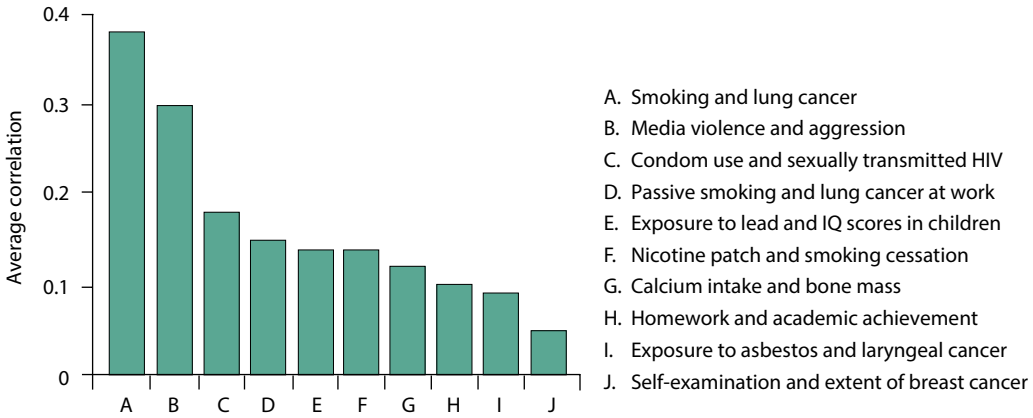

FIGURE 13.6 A comparison of media violence-aggressive behaviour correlations with other correlations

Source: Huesmann (2007). Copyright © (2007), reprinted with permission from Elsevier

The link between media consumption and aggression has been explained by several major social psychological theories of aggression. We have just touched on three of the causal mechanisms that might link media consumption to violence – encountering violence in the mass media makes it a more cognitively salient response possibility (social cognitive theory), may make it seem safe and rewarding (social learning theory), and may contribute to the hostile attribution bias by leading people to believe that violent, antisocial intentions are more common than they really are.

Mean world syndrome
Exaggerated perceptions of the frequency of violence and antisocial behaviour that may follow from the consumption of violent media material.

This last point is echoed by the claim that excessive consumption of mass media results in a **mean world syndrome**, in which ordinary citizens become paranoid about the risk of crime (Gerbner et al., 1977). Ironically, this paranoia may make crime actually more likely, as law-abiding people withdraw from public space and become less engaged in society (Putnam, 2000). This effect of television viewing on trust and civic engagement has been questioned by some authors, such as Uslaner (2002). Uslaner found that when he controlled for Americans' optimism about the future, the relationship between television viewing and decreased trust and civic engagement disappeared. Uslaner (2002) concludes that 'it is not television that makes people less trusting, but optimism for the future that makes people more trusting' (p. 467). However, his analysis does not exclude the possibility that declining optimism mediates the relationship between television viewing and trust. Using similar measures with a Flemish sample, Hooghe (2002) found robust relationships between watching television, and especially entertainment shows and commercial channels, and reduced civic engagement.

Desensitization
Reductions in negative emotions to violence that ensue from repeated exposure to violent stimuli. Because negative emotions help deter people from aggression, desensitization can lead to increased levels of aggression.

Another way in which media violence may promote aggression is that repeated viewing may reduce the fearful, negative reactions to violence that people normally experience. This process is termed **desensitization** (Bandura, 1978). It is essentially an example of normal associative

learning processes. Whereas in real life, aggression is normally paired with fear and danger, in violent media, aggression is often paired with fun, laughter and bad characters getting their comeuppance. Thus, violent media can cause people to unlearn the normal negative emotional associations of violence (Bushman & Huesmann, 2006). The theory is that when people contemplate aggressive responses or 'scripts' in real-life situations, they are normally deterred by their strong, negative emotional associations. If the prospect of aggressive responses arouses less fear and anxiety, they will seem more attractive (Huesmann, 1998). Although there is little direct evidence linking desensitization to aggressive behaviour, there is plenty of evidence showing that exposure to violence in films (Linz, Donnerstein & Adams, 1989; Thomas, Horton, Lippincott & Drabman, 1977) and video games (Carnagey, Anderson & Bartholow, 2007) reduces physiological responses to real-life violence.

In the past decade, research has uncovered a neurological mechanism by which desensitization may occur and lead to increased violence. A structure called the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), located in the frontal lobe, has been linked to aggressive behaviour (Sterzer, Stadler, Krebs, Kleinschmidt & Poustka, 2003). It is associated with links between cognition and emotion, and inhibition of part of the ACC may be indicative of the suppression of emotional information processing (Bush, Luu & Posner, 2000). In other words, it may play a part in the suppression of emotional reactions to violence, or desensitization (Carnagey et al., 2007). In one study of adolescents diagnosed with a clinical disorder, but who were not necessarily violent or disruptive, participants who reported consuming a great deal of violent media showed reduced ACC activity compared to those who did not. In fact, high consumers of violent media showed the same lowering of ACC activity as a group of adolescents with antisocial conduct disorders (Matthews et al., 2005). An fMRI study by Weber, Ritterfeld and Mathiak (2006) analysed patterns of brain activation frame by frame and revealed modified ACC activity at the moment of violent actions in the game.

EXPLORING FURTHER

We first encountered the ACC in Chapter 2, where it was associated with self-awareness. Often the same part of the brain can be associated with many functions. If you search 'functions of the amygdala' on the Internet, you will find a long list. It is worth considering whether this means that specific brain regions really have a multitude of precisely identified functions, or whether specific brain regions affect many different aspects of our psychology, but in ways that are not precisely understood. With regard to the present findings, perhaps desensitization works by causing people to think less about themselves, and perhaps less about their moral standards, when encountering violence. It could be seen as a neurological parallel of 'moral disengagement' or 'deindividuation'. You can read about these topics in Chapter 14 and Chapter 9 respectively.

In sum, media violence appears to affect violent behaviour in real life in many ways. Watching violent material or playing violent games may cause people to develop more positive attitudes towards aggression (e.g., as described by social learning theory), may desensitize them, may cause them to be more likely to perceive aggression in the environment (e.g., as described by hostile attribution bias), may lead them to be more likely to expect aggression from others or themselves, and may make aggressive 'scripts' more cognitively available to people as viable response options. All these mechanisms are incorporated in Anderson and Bushman's (2002) **general aggression model (GAM)**. This model describes the situational and personality variables that combine to produce human aggression (see Figure 13.7). According to this model, the use of violent media changes people's personality, over time. The GAM also suggests that

General aggression model (GAM) Model describing the situational and personality variables that combine to produce human aggression.

these personality factors, along with situational factors, such as pain, provocation, drugs and incentives to aggress, affect the social encounters that people experience. They may seek more aggressive social encounters. They may also respond to identical social encounters differently. Specifically, they may respond with higher levels of arousal, more negative, angry emotions and more aggressive thoughts. In turn, these responses affect their decisions, for example whether to engage in a thoughtful or an impulsive action. People's actions change the social encounters they are in, for example by provoking or frightening others. Thus, people's behaviour affects their personality and the situations in which they find themselves.

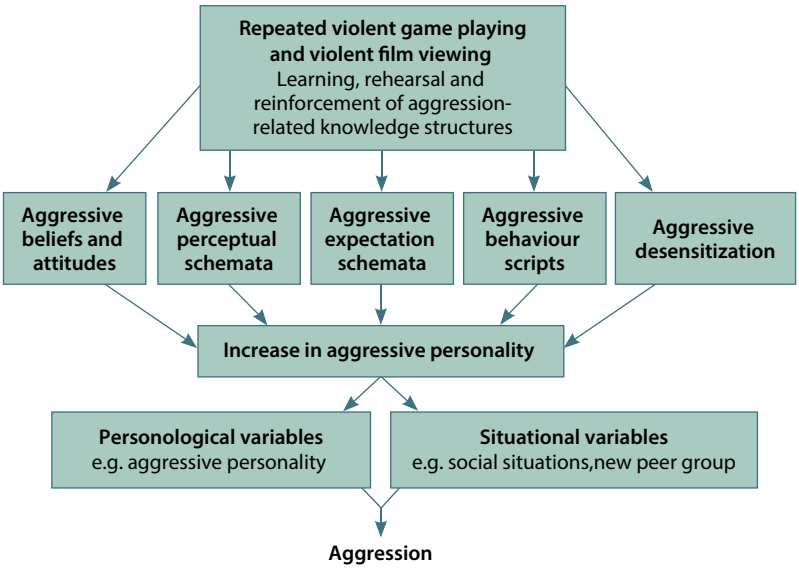

FIGURE 13.7 The many paths linking use of violent media to heightened aggression in real life

Source: Anderson and Bushman (2002). Republished with permission of Annual Reviews, permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Sometimes, violent media may interplay with people's personalities in a kind of vicious cycle. Recall the commonly held belief that aggressive energy builds up inside people over time, or as they are provoked, and that it can be released by catharsis. People who hold these 'catharsis beliefs' particularly strongly are more likely to play violent video games when they are angered (Bushman & Whitaker, 2010). Unfortunately, this attempt to expunge angry feelings and aggressive impulses is more likely to make them stronger.

Sport and aggression

The media are an important cultural source of ideas about aggression that can shape our behaviour. Sport is another, but its relationship with aggression is complex. Of course, sports vary widely in the extent to which they allow physical contact between players and hence behaviours that, in other contexts, would be regarded as straightforwardly aggressive (e.g., pushing, hitting and knocking to the ground). They also vary in the extent to which, outside the rules, aggressive conduct takes place. Theories of the function of sport have characterized it as a symbolic equivalent of war, in that sportspeople, like military personnel, engage in competitive, physically strenuous activity in order to win prestige for the wider national or regional groups they are representing. One line of thought portrays sport as a substitute or alternative to war. Writing from a psychodynamic perspective under the influence of Freud, Fenichel (1945) claimed that sport is a kind of 'substitute discharge' (p. 558) of aggressive energy that might otherwise be devoted to making war. This is clearly related to the notion that aggression can be released by means of catharsis. Indeed, Lorenz (1966), who is most

closely associated with the catharsis model, claimed that 'the main function of sport today lies in the cathartic discharge of aggressive urge' (p. 271) and argued that, in particular, it provided an alternative outlet for 'collective militant enthusiasm' (p. 273). Another line of thought portrays sport as a complement to war. For Luschen (1970), for example, 'sports are not only representative of societal norms and values ... [but] socialize toward such patterns' (p. 9). Thus, cultures that valorize group-based aggression and physical competition (that is, see these as good things), which are norms that might predict support for war, are more likely to engage in aggressive contact sports.

These two theoretical views of the relationship between sport and aggression generate different predictions. If sport is a cathartic outlet for aggressive energy that would otherwise lead to war (Fenichel, 1945; Lorenz, 1966), we would expect a negative relationship between sport and war at the societal level. Thus, we would expect more warlike societies to engage in fewer aggressive contact sports, and we might also expect that, during times of war, a given society will engage in such sports with lower intensity. This is because aggressive energy can be 'released' by either sport or war, and if one is present, there is no need for the other. On the other hand, if sport is the symbolic 'acting out' of cultural norms and values that can lead to war, we would expect exactly the opposite relationship: that aggressive sporting activity will be more common in warlike cultures and at times of war (see Figure 13.8).

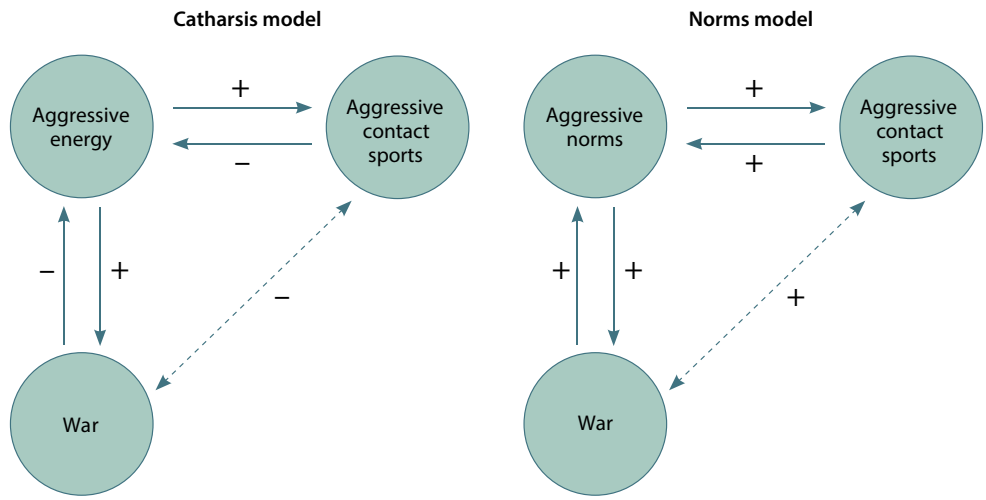

FIGURE 13.8 Two models of the relationship between aggressive contact sports and war The left-hand 'catharsis' model suggests that sport provides a release of aggressive energy, and so reduces the inclination to go to war (which would otherwise be required to release aggressive energy). The more aggressive contact sports that are played, the less aggressive energy there is, and so the less war there is (it also suggests that since war is an outlet for aggressive energy, warlike cultures would have little spare aggressive energy to vent by means of sport). The right-hand 'norms' model suggests that sport and war both reinforce a cultural norm of aggression. The more aggressive contact sports are played, the more aggression is seen as appropriate, and thus the more warlike a culture will be (likewise, the more war is waged, the more aggressive norms are reinforced, and these norms will be increasingly expressed in aggressive contact sports). So, there will be a positive rather than a negative relation between aggressive contact sports and war. Research supports the latter, norms model, dealing another blow to the notion of catharsis.

When Sipes (1973) examined data from a number of anthropological studies, he found that 87 per cent of warlike cultures featured aggressive contact sports, whereas only 11 per cent of cultures not classified as warlike did so. Similarly, when Sipes analysed sporting activity in the USA in the middle part of the 20th century, he found that sports such as hunting and football showed modest increases during the Second World War and the Korean War. In contrast, baseball did not show such an increase. Far from being a cathartic outlet for

collective aggression that makes war less likely, aggressive, physical sports seem to be part and parcel of a cultural mindset that underpins war.

Possibly, this cultural mindset is captured by the concept of *social dominance orientation* (SDO) (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth & Malle, 1994), the opposition to inequality and desire for group-based dominance that we encountered in Chapter 11. Although there is no evidence linking SDO to aggressive sports, there is abundant evidence associating it with support for war, as we shall see later. This 'blind spot' in knowledge is one that could be addressed with student research projects.

The fact that physical contact and struggle is inherent in some sports led Fields, Collins and Comstock (2007) to argue that researchers should not overlook the fact that some sports are inherently aggressive and so should not focus exclusively on illegal acts when they study aggression within sports (e.g., Fields, Collins & Comstock, 2010). Nonetheless, these same researchers (Collins, Fields & Comstock, 2008) found that illegal acts of aggressive cheating make a disproportionate contribution to sporting injuries. Some 6.4 per cent of nearly 100,000 sporting injuries included in their survey came from foul play, with a third of these afflicting the head or face and a quarter leading to concussion. An earlier study of injuries among British rugby players found that up to 31 per cent of reported injuries were attributable to foul play (Davies & Gibson, 1978). Foul play, along with reckless play, was cited as the most common cause of sporting injuries among Irish school children (Watson, 1994).

Given the number of sporting injuries that arise from foul play, it is important to examine its causes. Research has uncovered several situational and personality factors that underpin aggression on the sports field. By and large, the best predictor of aggressiveness on the field is aggressiveness off the field – much the same factors predict aggression in sport elsewhere (e.g., Maxwell & Visek, 2009). But also, a recurring finding, from both qualitative and quantitative research, is that participants in physical sports regard aggression on the field as more normal and acceptable than in everyday life (Traclet et al., 2009). Just as we saw with alcohol, we should not see sport as an automatic trigger of violent conduct. The cultural meaning that people attach to sport is important and guides their expectancies and motivation (Russell, 2008).

Keith J/Pixabay

Frank and Gilovich (1988) uncovered a surprising influence on aggression among sportspeople. They reasoned that since black is associated across many cultures with evil and death (for experimental evidence of this association, see Meier, Robinson & Clore, 2004; Sherman & Clore, 2009), teams who wear black jerseys may be penalized more for foul play. To test this idea, they first conducted an archival study of penalty rates in professional American football and ice hockey leagues. This revealed that teams wearing black were among the most penalized. When these teams changed their colours, for example when they wore their away strip, they were penalized less often. These findings are upheld by a more recent archival investigation of ice hockey matches (Webster, Urland & Correll, 2012). They are also consistent with other findings that support the notion of 'enclothed cognition' – what we wear profoundly influences how we think and act (Adam & Galinsky, 2012). Adam and Galinsky found, for example, that people paid more attention and made fewer errors on experimental tasks when wearing a white coat, as worn by doctors and scientists.

Frank and Gilovich (1988) also reasoned that the associative connotations of the colour black can affect penalty rates in two ways. First, it may cause referees to be quicker to penalize teams wearing black than some other colour, because the team kit almost literally colours the way they perceive the teams' play. Second, it may cause the players themselves to change their behaviour. Wearing black may subtly influence their self-image and motivation, causing them to be more prone to foul play. In a pair of experiments, Frank and Gilovich found support for both mechanisms. In the first of these experiments, participants watching videos of identical sequences of play were more likely to hypothetically penalize a player wearing black (rather than white) team kit. In the second, participants wearing black (rather than white) were more likely to choose to play aggressive games (e.g., 'dart gun duel' as opposed to 'stacking blocks'). Donning a black team kit caused the experimental group to choose these games more than when they were wearing no team kit, whereas the white kit had no effect on their choices. Black kit, then, appears to be a bad influence, but white does not improve people's morality on the sports field. Of course, this last experiment does not exactly replicate on-field aggression, so its external validity is open to question. However, in tandem with Frank and Gilovich's archival findings, it is more convincing: we have converging evidence that wearing black worsens conduct in sport.

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FIGURE 13.9 Aggressive clothing, aggressive behaviour?
In the UK, this kind of clothing is stereotypically associated with aggressive behaviour. On the basis of the effects of wearing black on the sports field, this kind of clothing might affect aggression on the streets.

TIME TO REFLECT

It seems to be clear that the colour of the clothing people wear on the sports field can affect their aggression (Figure 13.9). Can you think of examples where this might happen off the sports field? Do you think certain kinds of clothing worn on the street might trigger aggression – either by changing the psychology of the person wearing the clothes, or by changing other people's reactions to those clothes? You might want to conduct a database or Google Scholar search of terms like 'clothing' and 'aggression' to see if there is any support for your intuitions.

Sport elicits aggression not only in players but also in spectators. One of the biggest global sporting events is the American football Super Bowl final. Sachs and Chu (2000) found that domestic violence calls to the local police and emergency admissions of women spiked after the final, leading them to conclude that 'Super Bowl Sunday is often the biggest day of the year for domestic violence' (p. 1192). Following Welsh international rugby and football matches between 1995 and 2002, emergency admissions to Cardiff hospitals also increased (Sivarajasingam, Moore & Shepherd, 2005). Findings like these cause charities to brace themselves for increases in violence after major sporting events such as the Rugby World Cup (e.g., New Zealand Women's Refuge, 2011).

The effect of the outcome of sporting events is of key theoretical interest. Consider the predictions of social learning theory and the frustration-aggression model. Which one predicts more spectator violence among the supporters of the winning team, and which one predicts more spectator violence among the losing teams' fans? Losing is frustrating, and should generate more aggression among spectators according to the latter model. Conversely, to the extent that the sports match entails some kind of aggression, watching your team win amounts to watching it being rewarded for aggression. Social learning theory therefore predicts that more violence will be perpetrated by winning rather than losing fans. Studies that have analysed the effect of the outcome of matches on aggression point consistently in the direction of social learning theory. In their study, Sivarajasingam et al. (2005) found that Cardiff hospital admissions were higher after the Welsh team had won rather than lost. Earlier, White, Katz and Scarborough (1992) found that aggravated assaults of women increased in Washington, DC after the Washington Redskins, the local ice hockey team, won. When the team lost, this type of violence was the same as on non-match days.

Here, as always, it is important to consider alternative explanations for these correlations. Can you think of any? A clear possibility is the consumption of alcohol, which we have already seen to be a major contributing factor to aggression. Intuitively, we might guess that supporters stay out for longer, and drink more, after their team has won, because they are in a happy, celebratory mood – but go home with their tail between their legs if their team loses.

However, research by Moore, Shepherd, Ede and Sivarajasingam (2007) suggests that this increase in alcohol consumption is not responsible for the effect of victory on spectators' aggression. Moore et al. (2007) sampled from male fans attending rugby union matches at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, Wales. Some (115) were sampled before the match started, and served as a baseline against which the responses of the remaining (87) participants, who were sampled after the match, could be compared. Results showed that men whose team had just won reported feeling more aggressive than the baseline, pre-match group. Losing had no effect on their aggressive feelings. Interestingly, men's happiness did not increase when their team won – although losing decreased their happiness. Further, men who were happy were no more likely to indicate that they planned to drink. These findings suggest that men were not likely to stay out drinking because they were in an especially celebratory mood. While the intention to drink was not correlated with happiness, it was correlated with aggressive feelings. The more aggressive men were feeling, the more they wanted to drink. It would seem that we cannot use alcohol to explain away the effect of winning on aggression. If anything, alcohol may magnify the effect, by seeming especially attractive to those who have developed aggressive feelings. It seems that the cultural equation of alcohol and aggression discussed earlier (see the Social Psychology in the Real World box) plays an important part in the social consequences of sporting wins (see also Williams & Neville, 2014).

THE TRIBAL ANIMAL: THE GROUP DIMENSION OF AGGRESSION

Group processes and aggression

The amazing sociality of human beings – our ability to form coalitions, identify with groups and act together – has been the secret of our extraordinary successes, and has also, very often, been our downfall. In the colourful terminology of Brewer (1999), 'ingroup love' is all too often accompanied by 'outgroup hate', with sometimes terrible impacts on our behaviour. As we saw in Chapter 10, there are powerful *social facilitation* effects on aggression. Recall, for example, Mullen's (1986) research into lynchings, the appalling violence inflicted on African American victims by Whites in southern parts of the USA. The more ingroup members (White lynchers) present, compared to outgroup members (the Black victims), the more horrific and degrading the lynchings became.

The southern part of the USA has been the venue for another important breakthrough in the scientific understanding of how group processes can facilitate aggression. Social facilitation is normally defined as the effects of the mere presence of others on our behaviour, but the norms, values and cultures that groups of people create are also important. The southern part of the USA has historically been more violent than the North (Fischer, 1989). We have already seen that heat is a trigger for aggression – but it is not that Southerners are more aggressive in every which way. Rather, they are more aggressive than Northerners specifically in situations where they are required to defend themselves and their reputation, and when they are insulted (Nisbett, 1993). This led Cohen and Nisbett (1994) to suggest that the American South is characterized by a **culture of honour** – a particular concern for honour and reputation, and the belief that violence is justified and sometimes even required to defend it. For Cohen and Nisbett, this culture emerged because, for many years, the South was populated by herders who were left vulnerable to crimes such as banditry and cattle theft due to insufficient law enforcement. In this environment, it became important for men to establish a reputation that meant would-be criminals would not mess with them. Thus, in a vacuum of official law enforcement, it became normal to use violence in order to punish and deter wrongdoers.

Culture of honour A culture in which honour and reputation, especially of men, is held to be important, and in which violence is seen as a justified means of defending one's honour.

Manifestations of this culture have been cleverly explored by this group of researchers. Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle and Schwartz (1996) brought men from the North and South USA into the laboratory to complete a study. While they thought they were waiting to participate, a man bumped into them, adding a verbal insult while he was at it, and kept walking down the hall. Unbeknown to the participants, this man was, of course, a confederate of the experimenters. Compared to the Northerners, the Southerners subsequently displayed a spectacular array of aggressive responses, and cognitive and physiological precursors of aggression. The stress hormone cortisol increased, as did testosterone. They were more likely to believe that the confederate had harmed their reputation as a 'real man', were more likely to be rude to the experimenter, behaved more aggressively in an experimental game and wrote more aggressive stories.

In a subsequent field experiment, Cohen and Nisbett (1997) wrote unsolicited and fictional job applications to hundreds of retail shops in different parts of the USA. In the letter, the applicant (a 27-year-old, apparently local man) disclosed that he had been convicted of a crime. This was either a car theft or a crime of passion, in which he had hit a man with a pipe because he had taunted him in a bar in front of his friends about sleeping with his fiancee. The taunter died of his injuries, resulting in a manslaughter conviction for the applicant. He asked the managers to send him an application form, to invite him to drop by, or to give him the name of a contact

person. Responses to the 'motor vehicle theft' letter were the same across different regions of the USA. However, responses to the 'murder' condition were markedly different in the South and West (which had inherited a culture of honour from their colonial past) than in the North. In the North, return letters were much colder in tone (as rated by coders who did not know where the businesses were located) and much less likely to comply with the applicant's requests. It seems that in a culture of honour, it is okay to meet insult with injury (see Figure 13.10).

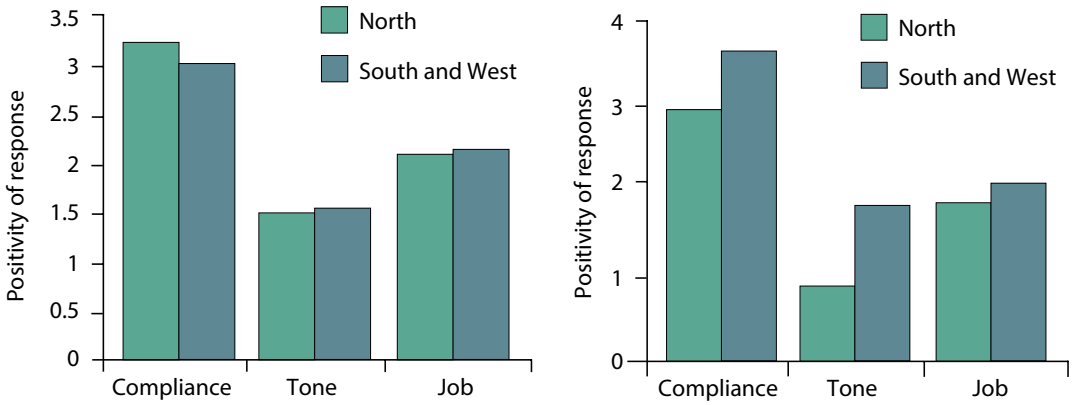

FIGURE 13.10 Findings from the field experiment in which letters were sent to employers in different areas of the USA The findings show that the 'honour' letter (right hand graph), in which the fictional job applicant confessed to having killed a man who taunted him about sleeping with his fiancee, tended to receive more sympathetic treatment in the North than in the South and West of the USA. There were no significant regional differences in response to the 'control' letter, in which the job applicant confessed to having stolen a car (left hand graph).

Source: Cohen and Nisbett (1997)

EXPLORING FURTHER

Might there be other cultures of honour around the world? The key characteristics of the American South are that men were vulnerable to property crime and were not adequately protected by a state apparatus. There is some evidence that compared to northern European cultures such as Germany, southern European cultures, such as Italy, have a stronger concern with male honour (see Rodriguez Mosquera, Manstead & Fischer, 2002). Searching online, can you find any research demonstrating a relation between such cultures and aggression levels, outside the USA? Do we have evidence that, in general, cultures of honour lead to higher aggression levels?

It is important to note, however, that the honour motivation is not restricted to highly patriarchal 'honour' cultures. Subcultures exist in many places in which aggression is deemed an acceptable way to resolve disputes, have fun and win honour. A qualitative investigation of pub brawls in England revealed that male honour played a big part in participants' accounts of their own aggressive behaviour. For example, one young male accounted for his violent reaction to a perceived provocation by saying: 'because I don't want some guy pushing me around, that's normal for me ... I'm not going to let some guy do that, then I'm not a real man right, if some guy can tell me who I can talk to and not, right' (Graham & Wells, 2003, p. 557). Furthermore, Guerra, Giner-Sorolla and Vasiljevic (2013) measured honour concerns across eight different countries (Brazil, Israel, Japan, Macedonia, New Zealand, Spain, the UK and the USA) and found that honour was important to people in all of these countries, but in different ways. Individualistic countries (e.g., the USA) were more concerned with integrity honour, whereas collectivistic countries were more concerned with family honour.

Intergroup violence: hate crimes

Lynching, the horrific form of violence investigated by Mullen (1986), not only illustrates a social facilitation effect, it also exemplifies the intergroup nature of much human aggression. Frequently, people are violent towards each other not because of their individual qualities but because of their social identities. Intergroup violence, therefore, can be seen as one manifestation of prejudice – the innate dislike of other groups. When individuals are attacked because of their membership of a disliked group, the offence is known legally as a **hate crime** (McDevitt, Levin & Bennett, 2002). In several countries including the UK, hate crimes attract harsher penalties in law, so that the group-based nature of violent crimes is treated as an aggravating circumstance (Bleich, 2011). Verbal aggression, in which hatred and insults towards groups are expressed, is described as 'hate speech' and is also outlawed in many countries (Josey, 2010). Hate speech and hate crimes have been shown to create a raft of mental and physical health problems both for people who are directly its victims and other members of the stigmatized groups (e.g., Boeckmann & Turpin-Petrosino, 2002; Crowley, 2014; Meyer, 2003).

Hate crime An aggressive and illegal act against a person or persons that is motivated by prejudice towards the group to which they belong.

Although hate crimes are officially disapproved of, some research suggests that unofficial attitudes to hate crimes may be more ambivalent (Craig & Waldo, 1996; Lyons, 2006). For example, Lieberman, Arndt, Personius and Cook (1999) conducted two studies investigating people's attitudes to hate crimes from a *terror management theory* (TMT) perspective. In TMT, awareness of our own mortality encourages us to symbolically seek immortality. In particular, TMT suggests that people respond to the fear of death by affirming cultural worldviews that promise to outlive them. Lieberman et al. reasoned that this may have a double-edged effect on attitudes to hate crime. On one hand, the perpetrators of hate crimes violate cherished social norms against violence and prejudice, and so threaten culturally shared worldviews. Also, in Lieberman et al.'s first study, participants were indeed more likely to support legislation targeting hate crimes after their own mortality had been made salient. On the other hand, the targets of hate crimes may themselves be perceived as a threat to culturally shared worldviews. For example, in homophobic cultures, gay men and women are perceived as a threat to 'normal' marriage and family life. In Lieberman et al.'s second study, participants were presented with descriptions of specific hate crimes, against either a Jewish or a homosexual victim. They were then asked to set a 'bail' amount that the perpetrator would have to pay to avoid being detained in prison while awaiting trial. Participants whose mortality had recently been made salient set lower bail amounts. Putting the two studies together, mortality salience seems to encourage opposition to hate crimes in the abstract, when a specific victim is not mentioned. However, when victims represent worldviews that are perceived to be different from their own, mortality salience may cause people to be relatively condoning of hate crimes.

CRITICAL FOCUS

Violence against women

Imagine that one group brutalizes another group in a modern Western society like the UK, murdering hundreds of its people, severely beating and raping thousands more. Associated with this violence, the perpetrator group tends to endorse a set of hostile stereotypes and ideologies about the group it is victimizing that consign the group to a relatively powerless, subordinate social position (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Well, there is no need to use your imagination, because we are referring to the violence that is actually perpetrated by men against women.

Admittedly, we are being provocative, but this is a factually accurate description of what happens in the UK, and elsewhere. According to official statistics (Walby & Allen, 2004), twice as many women than men in the UK

(21 per cent compared to 10 per cent) have been subject to domestic violence as an adult. The domestic abuse inflicted by men upon women tends to be much more severe than the other way around – women comprise 89 per cent of the population of those who are subject to repeated and serious physical abuse in which injuries are inflicted, while 17 per cent of women and 2 per cent of men have been subjected to sexual victimization in their adulthood. And although our opening here is a little provocative, it is nothing compared to Brownmiller's (1975) landmark feminist treatise of the 1970s. Brownmiller (1975) claimed that rape, perhaps the most salient of all forms of violence, is 'nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear' (p. 15).

What are we to make of this claim? It has all sorts of problems if we treat it literally as a scientific hypothesis – and you can explore these for yourself in the Applying Social Psychology exercise at the end of the chapter. But the statistics we have quoted and the role that sexism seems to play in violence towards women (see, e.g., Abrams, Viki, Masser & Bohner, 2003) suggest that Brownmiller may have had a point. The point is that violence by men against women has an intergroup dimension, even though it generally occurs interpersonally, between individual men and women. It is much more frequent and serious than violence by women against men, it is supported by, and associated with, men's prejudice towards women and ideologies about women's role, and, in turn, it has detrimental and restrictive effects on women, even those who have not themselves been directly raped or assaulted.

If we read Brownmiller's (1975) claim in this way, there is extensive research support for it. Women are more afraid of crime than men (Hale, 1996). In large part, this is because women are much more afraid of being raped, which means that other crimes, such as burglary and robbery, take on a more sinister meaning for them (Warr & Stafford, 1983). This fear of crime is accompanied by feelings of vulnerability, meaning that women perceive themselves as more likely to be the victim of an unprovoked attack, and less likely to be able to defend themselves (Jackson, 2009; Riger & Gordon, 1981; Smith & Torstensson, 1997). Fear of crime generally, and rape in particular, deters women from using public spaces, especially by themselves and especially at night (e.g., Riger & Gordon, 1981). After reading newspaper reports of rape, women who have not themselves been raped experience reduced self-esteem, and tend to be more likely to endorse a subordinate social role for women (e.g., Bohner, Weisbrod, Raymond, Barzvi & Schwartz, 1993; Schwarz & Brand, 1983). In a cruel irony, the moral burden for the victimization of women tends to fall on women, who are expected to be the guardians of their sexuality and are often blamed when they are raped (e.g., Viki & Abrams, 2002). Research also suggests that women experience pressure to be fearful and cautious, and are judged more favourably if they are fearful (Sutton, Robinson & Farrall, 2011). According to research and theory, then, the fear of crime disempowers women in several ways – it deters them from activities perceived to increase the risk of victimization, it causes them to internalize ideologies and prejudices that are detrimental to their gender group, and it imposes on them a perceived duty to be cautious and even fearful.

We therefore think – although you may disagree – that we should view the violence that men use against women, in the social and ideological context in which it happens, as a form of intergroup violence. It is not an easy or comfortable position to take, and it is debatable. But it is worth taking seriously. The way we opened this section was crafted not just to provoke this consideration but also to encourage you to look at this aspect of gender relations with fresh eyes. As we saw in Chapter 5 on communication, we often 'normalize' or take for granted the status quo between the genders. Thus, we accept sexist language such as the masculine generic when we would not accept similarly racist language; for example, 'Throughout man's history, there has been violent intergroup conflict' does not read as oddly and unacceptably as 'Through Whites' history, there has been violent intergroup conflict', because we are accustomed to it and it is supported by gender ideologies we unconsciously accept. There is a real possibility that we have taken for granted, if not quite accepted, gendered violence in much the same way.

Questions

1. Brownmiller's claim is often attacked as either implausible or too vague to be tested scientifically. What is wrong with it? Take a careful look, for example, at some of the key words – 'all' men keep 'all' women down. Do you think this is true? And do you think keeping women in their place in this way is something that men do 'consciously'? Can you find research in this textbook or on the Internet to support your view?
2. Using an Internet search engine, find research on 'domestic violence' or 'partner violence'. Do you think it could be explained in the same way as Brownmiller explains rape, that is, it serves to keep women in their place generally (not just its direct victims)?

Hate crimes are a manifestation of prejudice. However, intergroup violence can happen even in the absence of prejudice – sometimes, mere stereotypes are enough. In research on the 'weapons effect', Payne (2001; Payne, Lambert & Jacoby, 2002) presented American participants with a picture of either a Black or a White face, sometimes subliminally, that is, so fast that people were unable to consciously identify what they had just seen. Immediately afterwards, they were presented with a picture of either a handgun or a hand tool (e.g., a screwdriver) (see Figure 13.11). If they had just seen a Black face, participants were quicker to correctly identify the handguns; if they had just seen a White face, they were quicker to correctly identify the hand tools. One reason this might have happened is that in America, Black people are stereotypically associated with crime and violence, because of race biases in the objective incidence of crime and, perhaps especially, in media portrayals of crime. Even participants who do not have an emotional aversion to Black people have been exposed, many times, to this stereotype.

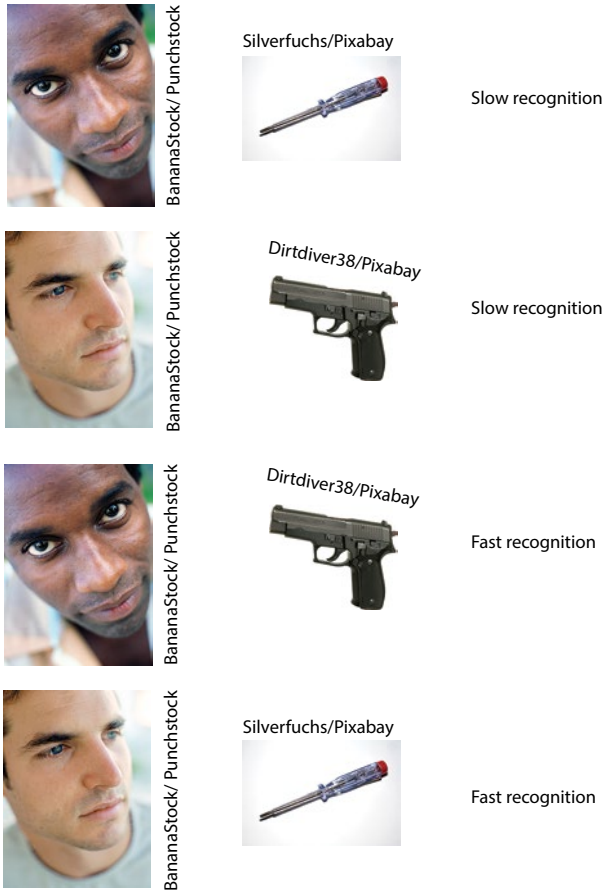

FIGURE 13.11 The weapons effect In the weapons effect, participants are slower to correctly recognise weapons than innocent hand tools if they have first seen a White face, but faster to recognise weapons than hand tools if they have seen a Black face. This is thought to be due to the stereotypical association of Black people with violence and weapons.

In support of this interpretation of the weapons effect, Judd, Blair and Chapleau (2004) presented Black and White faces in a similar way, but in their experiment, followed these with pictures of positive and negative stimuli that were not stereotypically associated with Black people, such as fruit and insects, respectively. Exposure to Black faces had no effect on the time taken to recognize these objects. If a generally negative attitude towards Black people was the driving force in Payne's (2001) study, we would expect people to be subsequently quicker to identify insects (the negative stimuli) than fruit (the positive stimuli). Another important finding, making the same point, was that exposure to Black faces not only facilitated recognition of handguns, it also facilitated recognition of sports equipment (e.g., American footballs). These are *positively* valued stimuli that are also stereotypically associated with Black people in the USA.

Why might this weapons effect matter? What if you were a police officer working in poor visibility and you saw a Black person emerge, appearing to carry something that might be a gun? Having cottoned on to the potential for this bias to result in disaster, researchers have begun to employ computerized 'shooting games'; ingroup or outgroup members appear suddenly on the screen and the participants' job is to 'shoot' them by depressing a computer key – if they are armed. In the USA, participants are more likely to mistakenly shoot unarmed targets if they are Black (rather than White), and are also less likely to mistakenly fail to shoot armed Black targets (Correll, Park, Judd & Wittenbrink, 2002).

Another study confirmed that, once again, stereotypes, rather than prejudice, appear to be largely responsible for this effect. When Australian participants were exposed to a mood induction procedure that put them in a good mood, they were more likely to show an intergroup bias, being especially prone to shooting targets wearing Muslim headdress (Unkelbach, Forgas & Denson, 2008). When placed in a negative mood, they were less likely to show this bias. Previous research shows that positive mood increases reliance on stereotypes, because people are less motivated to be careful or accurate in their decision making (Forgas, 1998). In contrast,

negative mood states encourage caution and accuracy. The pattern of results makes sense from a stereotyping perspective – Muslim headdress is stereotypically associated with aggression and thus elicits biased responses when people are in a good mood. If prejudice was the key to the shooting bias, we would expect, if anything, the negative mood to heighten it.

It is reassuring, in a sense, that intergroup violence is not always due to out and out prejudice. Biases may stem from innocent mistakes triggered only by widely known, shared stereotypes. However, this is a double-edged sword – it suggests that intergroup aggression can erupt even when groups do not hate each other. In the next section, we shall see how large-scale forms of intergroup aggression emerge from conflicts over resources and the fear of coming last.

Corporate intergroup aggression: when aggression is a group behaviour

A strong feature of human aggression is that it is often a coordinated, group-level activity. Groups, as well as individuals, aggress against each other. War is one mode of intergroup aggression, in which groups act collectively to do harm to each other, by means of military personnel and specialized military technology. Terrorism is another mode of intergroup aggression in which members of one group carry out aggressive actions designed to inflict fear on another group in order to achieve some political objective. Genocide occurs when members of one group attempt to systematically remove or eliminate another group.

As we saw in Chapter 11, we have known since Sherif et al.'s Robbers Cave study ([1954]1961) that intergroup conflict, including acts of verbal and physical aggression, is often triggered by conflicts over resources. Large-scale conflicts such as war and genocide are often triggered by the competing demands of rival groups for land, power or other resources. In a crude economic sense, these conflicts, setting aside the moral questions and the appalling suffering they inflict, may make sense. In a zero-sum game, groups benefit if they can grab resources. However, there is plenty of theory and evidence to suggest that these kinds of conflicts are not coolly calculated. Groups will sometimes engage in mutually destructive conflicts over resources that could never be valuable enough to replace those being expended, even leaving moral questions aside (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

One reason they do this appears to be the desire to ensure that whatever happens, the ingroup comes out ahead of, or at least not behind, the outgroup in relative terms. So, people acting on behalf of their group sometimes make what has been called 'Vladimir's choice' – a decision that amounts to sacrificing the wellbeing of the ingroup in an effort to ensure that the outgroup does even worse (Wildschut, Insko & Gaertner, 2002). Thus, when playing intergroup social dilemma games (there is more on social dilemmas in Chapter 14), people prefer to secure, say, 90 credits for the ingroup in order to ensure that the outgroup gets less (say, 80), rather than secure 120 credits for the ingroup and risk the outgroup getting still more. This has been linked to social dominance orientation (SDO). In one study, participants who were higher in SDO were more likely to make Vladimir's choice in a social dilemma (Sidanius, Prato & Levin, 2006).

As is often the case, social comparison processes are important. It is not so much what we have, as what we have relative to others. When groups find themselves relatively worse off, the situation they strive so hard to avoid, aggression often follows. A sense of relative deprivation may be important in triggering individuals to be aggressive, but appears to be even more important in triggering groups to be aggressive. A sense of relative deprivation has been found to be an important trigger, blamed for actions as diverse as riots, terrorism (Moghaddam, 2005), international aggression and genocide (Staub, 2000).

Different forms of intergroup violence, such as war, terrorism and genocide, may have different social psychological underpinnings. Although war and terrorism are both ways of

securing symbolic victories for the ingroup over the outgroup, they may appeal to different groups for different reasons. War, for example, may be the method of choice for economically and politically dominant groups, who perceive that they have the means to protect and reinforce their dominant position. Terrorism, on the other hand, may be favoured by groups that are economically and politically weaker, who may perceive acts of terror as a means of 'freedom fighting', that is, counteracting the dominance they feel other groups exert over them (Bueno de Mesquita & Dickson, 2007; White, 1991).

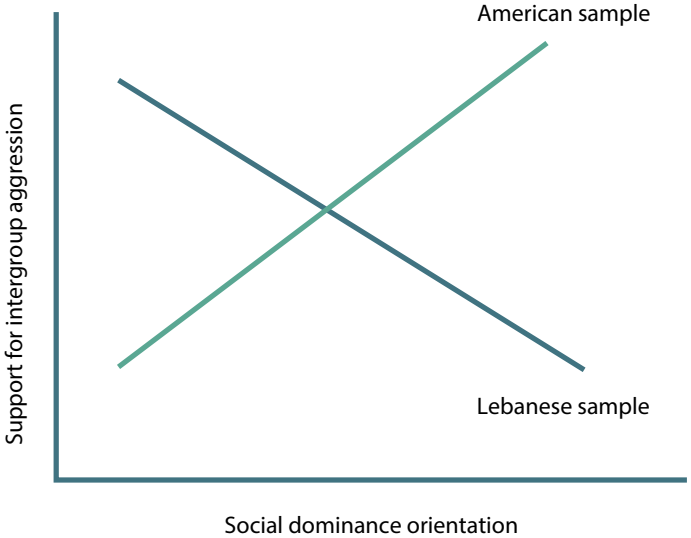

FIGURE 13.12 Relationship between social dominance orientation and support for intergroup violence Terrorist actions against Western targets, in the case of the Lebanese sample, and military action against Middle Eastern targets, in the case of the American sample, serve the purpose of counteracting group-based dominance.

Source: Henry et al. (2005)

This analysis was supported by an intriguing study of support for war and terrorism in the Middle East conflict by Henry, Sidanius, Levin and Pratto (2005). Among an American sample, both SDO and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) were positively correlated with support for military action by the USA and its allies against Afghanistan and Islamist terrorists. Thus, Americans who were high in either SDO or RWA agreed more strongly with statements such as 'Afghanistan should be invaded or bombed until they surrender bin Laden'. These results contrasted with a Lebanese sample, who were asked whether they supported anti-Western violence that would traditionally be labelled as terrorism. Lebanese participants who were high in SDO were *less* likely to endorse this type of anti-Western aggression, and so tended to agree *less* strongly with statements such as 'The attack on the World Trade Center was justified'. Even so, just as RWA was positively correlated with support for warlike actions among American participants, it was also positively correlated with support for terrorist actions among Lebanese participants (see Figure 13.12). RWA is associated with adherence to traditional values and deference to authority, so can be expected to lead to support for aggressive actions, sanctioned by ingroup authority figures, against an outgroup that appears to have different values. However, SDO is associated with a preference for hierarchical, dominance-based intergroup relations. The different patterns observed on the two sides of the Middle East conflict suggest that, at least in this context, intergroup aggression in the form of military action, for Americans, serves the purpose of dominance. On the other hand, for Lebanese, intergroup aggression in the form of terrorism serves the purpose of counteracting group-based dominance.

Evolutionary bases of intergroup violence

We started this chapter by considering whether, as many thinkers have argued, human beings' biological heritage has aggressive responses hard-wired into them (e.g., Lorenz, 1966). For other scholars, the extent and nature of aggression is primarily, or entirely, a matter of culture – what we learn and observe from others and the responses that are readily available to us (Bandura, 1978). A recent manifestation of this fundamental debate between evolutionary social psychologists and scholars from other theoretical perspectives has surrounded the topic of gender differences in support for intergroup aggression.

Of course, males *are* more likely to be active participants in armed conflicts, but this could be explained purely in terms of gender role specialization: men are physically bigger and

stronger on average and so, in a way, it makes sense to 'give' them this role (Eagly & Wood, 1999). However, recent findings have been used to suggest that evolutionary processes have predisposed males towards warfare. The argument is that competition between males is a feature of any species in which they are the sex that invests less in parenting (Trivers, 1972). In such species, males are the bigger sex, mature later, take more risks, vie for mates and show higher levels of intra-sex aggression. Evolutionary anthropologists have argued that males who are successful warriors have privileged access to women. For example, one estimate based on studies of the Y chromosome suggests that 16 million men worldwide and up to 8 per cent of Asian men are descended from Genghis Khan (Zerjal, Xue, Bertorelle et al., 2003). For evolutionary psychologists, war is a manifestation of a tendency to compete with each other, ultimately for access to mates, that has been built into men by these evolutionary forces (e.g., van Vugt, De Cremer & Janssen, 2007).

In an attempt to test this idea, van Vugt et al. (2007) had undergraduate students in an English university play a social dilemma game. We will discuss social dilemmas further in Chapter 14, but the basic structure of these games is that participants are allocated money, which they can either keep for themselves or donate to their group. Each individual participant is always better off if they keep their own money, but, overall, everyone in the group benefits if participants are willing to sacrifice some of their money for the good of the group. The twist in this study was that an experimental group of participants were led to believe there was an intergroup dimension to the social dilemma. Specifically, they were told that groups of students from other English universities were playing the game too, and that the aim of the task was to compare how well students at different universities did the task. In the control, 'individual' condition, participants were told that the purpose of the experiment was to compare how well different individuals did the task. In this 'individual' control condition, men were less willing than women to donate their money to the group cause. However, in the intergroup condition, when participants thought they were collectively competing against other universities, men were much more willing to donate their money to the group cause, and in fact donated more money than women.

Van Vugt et al. (2007) argued that their experiments reveal how in times of intergroup conflict, men are predisposed to sacrifice their personal interests for the sake of the ingroup. They term this idea the **male warrior hypothesis**. The extent to which you accept this label should depend on whether the experiments are really an accurate model of the choices confronting men at times of war. There is no physical aggression displayed in these studies, and no overt reference to war or aggression is made in the experiments. There is no animosity towards the outgroups. The experiment is also open to other interpretations. Perhaps male participants were more motivated simply to be competitive and thus responded to the instructions more sensitively than women. Thus, when they were led to believe they could 'win' as individuals, they hoarded their money, and when they thought they were trying to ensure their group would 'win', they donated to the group. On the basis of this experiment alone, the 'male warrior', like the 'warrior gene' before it, may turn out to be a good example of scientific marketing that does not necessarily reflect empirical findings.

The male warrior hypothesis The argument that men who are effective warriors have had an advantage in accessing mates and thus passing on their genes. As a result, through evolutionary processes, men have acquired a psychological makeup that predisposes them to warlike behaviour.

However, other studies also appear to provide some support for the evolutionary argument that males are predisposed towards war. In a series of experiments with Chinese participants, Chang, Lu, Li and Li (2011) assessed male and female heterosexual participants' expressed support for warlike statements, and their attentional bias towards warlike stimuli such as soldiers and tanks. All participants had first been shown photos of attractive, opposite-sex stimulus persons. When these faces were attractive, male participants later expressed more support for war and responded more quickly to warlike stimuli. Female participants were not affected by the attractiveness of the stimulus photos. Chang et al. (2011) argued

Pixabay

that these findings reflect the effect of mating goals in promoting warlike behaviour in men. They appeal poetically to the notion that Helen of Troy was the 'face that launched a thousand ships' in the Trojan War – that female beauty inspires warlike behaviour. An alternative interpretation might be precisely that there is a widespread cultural idea that there is something chivalrous or sexually glamorous about war. In other words, perhaps we inherit entirely from our culture, and not from our biological heritage, the idea that warlike activity is a way for men to win the favour of attractive women. There is some recent evidence to suggest that warlike activity does increase men's sexual success. Rusch, Leunissen and van Vugt (2015) report an archival study comparing US veterans of the Second World War who had won the Medal of Honor (i.e., war heroes) with a regular sample of World War Two veterans. They found that the war heroes had more offspring that the regular veterans. In follow-up experimental studies they found that female participants also found men more sexually attractive if they were war heroes. Male participants did not show this effect. Of course, whether this reflects an evolutionary phenomenon or a cultural phenomenon cannot necessarily be concluded from these studies.

Further evidence gives reason to think that perhaps there could be a culturally universal male orientation towards war and other forms of intergroup aggression. As we have noted, men tend to be higher in social dominance orientation than women. However, this finding may emerge simply because men tend to occupy a dominant position in society. Sidanius, Pratto and Bobo (1994) found that men reported higher SDO scores than women when their cultural, demographic or political persuasion was held constant. That is, among participants of the same cultural, demographic and/or political persuasion, men tended to be higher in SDO than women. Sidanius et al. interpreted this finding as support for the notion that SDO should be expected to be higher in men than women across cultures. Social dominance theory attempts to integrate evolutionary and cultural analyses of masculinity and warfare. It suggests that the selective evolutionary pressures in favour of male aggression have contributed to cultural ideologies that venerate male dominance and aggression.

A single sample of Los Angeles residents such as in Sidanius et al.'s study is not enough to provide convincing support for the claim that men are universally higher in SDO than women. The fact remains that within any group in society, matched on other variables, men will also be

members of the higher status group. It is difficult, if not impossible, to rule out the possibility that they are higher in SDO simply because of their relatively dominant position. In fact, research by Batalha, Reynolds and Newbigin (2011) suggests that this social, rather than evolutionary, explanation for the gender difference might be more likely. In one of their studies, Batalha et al. found that men endorsed SDO more than women in Australia but not in Sweden – the latter being a more egalitarian society in which social hierarchies between women and men are less marked. In another study, they found a significant gender difference in SDO when participants were assigned to low status but not high status groups. They divided Australian undergraduate students into small groups of men and women and got each group to solve anagram tasks. In a bogus feedback manipulation, each small group was told that they were either doing much better (high status) or much worse (low status) than the opposite gender group. When assigned to low status groups, men reported higher SDO than women, but when assigned to high status groups, the gender difference in SDO was no longer significant.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Complete the social dominance orientation scale and compare your mean to that of established studies.

Which of the following objects or statements do you have a positive or negative feeling towards? Beside each statement, place a number from 1 = very negative to 7 = very positive.

1 **Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.**
2 **In getting what you want, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups.**
3 **It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.**
4 **To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.**
5 **If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems.**
6 **It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom.**
7 **Inferior groups should stay in their place.**
8 **Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place.**
9 **It would be good if groups could be equal.**
10 **Group equality should be our ideal.**
11 **All groups should be given an equal chance in life.**
12 **We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups.**
13 **Increased social inequality is beneficial to society.**
14 **We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally.**
15 **We should strive to make incomes as equal as possible.**
16 **No one group should dominate in society.**

Source: Pratto et al. (1994). Copyright © 1994 by the American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

This is the scale developed by Pratto et al. (1994). It, and shorter versions, have been widely used in subsequent studies. You can add up and then calculate the mean of your 16 responses. Items 9–16 should be reverse scored: 7s should become 1s, 6s become 2s, and so on, because they reflect negative reactions to social dominance. Note how abstract the scale is – it takes care not to refer to specific groups or specific aspects of intergroup relations.

If nothing else, the study by Batalha et al. (2011) shows that men are not always significantly more oriented to social dominance than women. However, it has to be said that in each of their studies, there was always a 'main effect' of gender meaning that averaging across all the experimental conditions, men's SDO was significantly higher than women's. Also, even in the conditions where the gender difference was no longer significant, the trend was for men to

report higher SDO – their mean was higher, but not significantly so, than women's. Finally, it is not clear why men's SDO should have been higher when they were told they were doing worse (the low status condition) than women in the anagram group rather than better (the high status condition). A control group in which men and women were of equal status – simulating the relatively egalitarian social conditions of Sweden, in their first study – would have been useful. For a detailed discussion of the evolutionary argument for gender differences in SDO that is favoured by social dominance theorists versus the social argument favoured by others, see Sidanius, Cotterill, Sheehy-Skeffington, Kteily and Carvacho (2016).

All in all, it appears that men are generally, if not always, higher in SDO (Sidanius et al., 1994; Batalha et al., 2011) and are more likely to act like traditional warriors. Exposure to attractive women appears to heighten their interest in war (Chang et al., 2011), and involvement in intergroup competition seems to enhance their willingness to sacrifice their interests to the group (van Vugt et al., 2007). However, these conclusions are based on just a handful of articles, and much more research is needed before we can generalize across cultures and make claims about human universality. In principle, it is going to be difficult to tease apart any evolutionary mechanisms from culture in explaining these effects. Sex role specialization, in which men take on physically risky and combative roles, appears to be a more or less universal feature of human cultures. Whether this is simply because of men's greater size and strength (Eagly & Wood, 1999) or evolved differences in men and women's psychology is difficult to determine, no matter how many research findings we have at our disposal.

This recent debate is but one aspect of the still more general conundrum – is human aggression hard-wired, and does culture do much more than merely shape the form it takes? In this chapter, we have seen evidence that in other animals, levels of aggression can be inherited, so much so that it is possible to breed aggressive and non-aggressive strains. In humans as in other animals, specific brain structures and chemistries seem to play a role in aggressive behaviour. Humans, like other animals, respond with predictably heightened aggression when confronted with aversive conditions like heat, overcrowding and frustration. Aggression between individuals and groups appears to feature in all known human societies. However, the level and the form of aggression appear to change radically between cultures. Norms, values, the media and recreational drugs play a unique role in shaping human levels of aggression. Aggressive responses in the aftermath of the use of alcohol or violent media content appear to depend on the cultural meaning attached to these cues – if people expect them to lead to aggression, their expectancies tend to become self-fulfilling. Clearly, human aggression is the joint product of biological and cultural evolution. Major questions about the interplay between these two forces, and the extent to which biological evolution has shaped much more than the basic tendency to aggress, remain for new generations of researchers to answer.

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

The Student Project on page 654 by Geneviv Fanous from the University of New South Wales examined the ways in which certain cues (e.g., a person's race, tattoos) influence people's perceptions of their aggression in bar settings. Geneviv's experimental research is relevant to the research covered in this chapter, and also the research on impression formation (Chapter 3) and stereotyping (Chapter 4).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have outlined how social psychologists, and scientists from other disciplines such as biology, have approached the problem of aggression. We have discussed the forms and the causes of human aggression. In particular, we have discussed the ways in which biological, social and cultural forces interact to produce aggressive behaviour. The key points to take away from this chapter are as follows:

- Aggression is behaviour intended to harm another. The intended harm may be social or physical.
- Philosophers and biologists have argued that aggression is hard-wired into human beings, like other animals, because of its evolutionary value in competition for resources.
- Some biological approaches to aggression have suggested that humans and other animals are subject to an aggressive drive or energy that requires release by means of aggressive behaviour. However, there is little support for this notion that catharsis reduces aggressive energy. If anything, attempting to reduce aggression by means of catharsis is counterproductive.
- However, there is plenty of evidence that aggression does have a biological basis in humans and other animals. Aggression has been experimentally bred into, and out of, mammalian species. Twin studies have some profound methodological problems but suggest that the more genetically related two people are, the more similar their levels of aggression will be. Specific chemicals and structures in the brain have been linked to aggressive behaviour. Thus far, there is no compelling evidence linking specific genes to aggressive behaviour.
- Alcohol is a major cause of aggression in humans, but its effects are not purely biological. They also depend on cultural beliefs about alcohol and its effects.
- Social forces are important in human aggression. When people are narcissistic (have inflated but insecure views of themselves), they require others to bolster their self-view and react aggressively when their self-image is threatened by others. People respond to frustration, the feeling of relative deprivation and the modelling of aggression by others. Their aggression also depends on whether they perceive others' intentions to be hostile.
- Mass entertainments, such as the media and sport, have a powerful role in shaping aggressive behaviour.
- Consumption of violent media material and participation in, and viewing of, aggressive sports contribute to aggressive behaviour. This is especially so when the aggression in sport and media is rewarding, consistent with major social psychological theories such as social learning theory. Repeated exposure to violence in the media also desensitizes people to aggression: they become less sympathetic to victims and respond to aggression with lower levels of negative emotion.
- Culture affects aggression. For example, aggression is more common in cultures in which reputation and honour (especially of men) are highly prized. The cultural metaphors that people have about aggression can contribute to aggressive behaviour. For example, the notion that anger is a kind of heat or pressure can lead people to try to control their emotions and aggressive tendencies by engaging in aggression.
- Many forms of aggression are not directed solely at individuals but also at the groups to which they belong. These can be termed 'hate crimes'. Examples include lynching, genocide and, arguably, rape.
- Aggressive behaviour is fostered when cues in the environment bring the possibility of aggressive responses to the forefront of people's minds. Thus, the presence of guns or other weapons may elicit aggressive responses. This has an intergroup dimension: people from certain cultural backgrounds may experience outgroup clothing, such as religious headdress, as a prime that reminds them of aggression. Black sports kit may also prime aggression.
- Some catastrophic forms of human aggression are perpetrated not only by individuals but also by social groups – individuals from one group acting in concert against another. War, terrorism and genocide are examples of this 'corporate' aspect of human aggression.

- Human beings, and men in particular, may have evolved to engage in this kind of corporate intergroup aggression. However, the experimental evidence for this argument is currently weak and controversial.

Our focus in this chapter has been on one of the darkest aspects of human behaviour. In Chapter 14, we consider nobler features of human nature – a love of justice, the willingness to cooperate with each other and preserve the environment.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. Evaluate the claim that aggression can be reduced by means of catharsis.
2. How does consumption of violent media material, such as violent video games, contribute to real-life aggression?
3. Evaluate theory and research findings suggesting that men are more aggressive in interpersonal and intergroup relations.

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Bullying interventions

Bullying is a common and problematic form of aggression, which features repeated acts of aggression against people who cannot easily defend themselves (Olweus, 1993; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen & Voeten, 2005). It is a pattern of behaviour that exploits and widens a power imbalance between bully and victim, and is associated with bad outcomes for victim and bully. Although bullying can involve physical and social acts of aggression, its overall flavour is social, as its principal aim seems to be to do emotional and social harm to the victim (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross & Isava, 2008).

Imagine that, as a social psychology consultant, you have been asked by a local school to advise it as it designs an intervention to try to reduce bullying in the school. In consultancies like this, your first job is normally to search the psychological literature for theory and evidence on the topic. You would then make recommendations for an intervention based on what appears to be the most promising and effective principles of intervention. The exercises below are designed to provide an approximate simulation of this process.

1. Search online using a database such as Google Scholar to find at least three anti-bullying interventions designed in the past 20 years. Note the full citations in APA format. Also note how often each has been cited in academic and other sources (this information is provided by most databases along with the title and abstract). This gives you some idea of how influential and widely applied the intervention has been, although newer papers will have been cited less often. Good search terms would include 'bullying' and 'intervention'.
2. There are many such interventions, and articles outlining and testing interventions will be available to you for free through your institution's library or on publicly accessible websites. Retrieve three of these articles. They should be original empirical papers describing and outlining a single intervention with method and results sections, rather than review articles. Write a paragraph on each aspect of each paper:
   - Interventions are informed by a theoretical understanding of the causes of the problem. What theoretical assumptions does each article make about the causes of bullying?
   - What are the key features of each intervention? How thoroughly described are they and how do they relate to the underlying theoretical assumption?

- How was the effectiveness of the manipulation tested? What outcomes were assessed, how, and with what results?

3. In addition to original empirical papers, meta-analyses and other reviews of the literature (literature reviews that do not include a meta-analysis are sometimes called *qualitative reviews*) are useful sources in consultancies like this. They typically compare and contrast different theories, interventions and methods for testing the effectiveness of interventions. Thus, they provide you with an excellent overview of the research literature and also help you find empirical articles that may have escaped your attention. Find at least one review article published within the past ten years on bullying interventions.

   - Write down the full citation of the review paper you have found, and summarize its key conclusions in one or two paragraphs. Notably, how effective generally do bullying interventions seem to be? Which type of intervention seems to be most effective? What outcomes are most likely to be affected by bullying interventions? Note that some interventions do not affect actual rates of bullying behaviour, and may not be designed to do so: instead, some bullying interventions target attitudes to bullying.
   - Finally, restrict the search you did in exercise 1 above to the past two years, to find a new bullying intervention. This will help give you some idea of the 'state of the art' in the field. Note down the full citation and summarize as you did in 2 above.
   - Now, write a brief summary of the report you would provide for the school. This should fit on two sides of an A4 page. Your report summary should include:
     - a title
     - a definition of bullying and a summary of its consequences for school children
     - major theoretical accounts of bullying
     - an evaluation of different approaches to intervention – which is most likely to be effective?
     - recommendations for steps that the school should take to reduce bullying
     - recommendations for how the school should test the success of its intervention
     - a reference list (citations should be made in text, in APA format).

4. Finally, most of the research on bullying has been concerned with bullying in schools. However, in recent years there has been growing concern about cyberbullying – bullying via electronic means such as email and social media. A recent meta-analysis found that like bullying, being a victim of cyberbullying is associated with suicidal thinking and stress (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder & Lattanner, 2014). Whilst undertaking your literature search for this exercise, take a look at the literature on cyberbullying versus bullying. Are the characteristics of bully and victim the same in both cases? Are the consequences the same for bully and victim? It is important to consider that bullying can take many different forms and in an age where children conduct much of their social lives online, cyberbullying is an important and growing area of research. Constantly changing technology also presents a challenge for the study of cyberbullying by researchers. It is also important to note that although bullying research is primarily concerned with children, it can also occur in adulthood. In particular, there is a body of literature examining bullying in the workplace (e.g., Samnani & Singh, 2012). Take a look at some of this literature and think about the similarities and differences between adult and childhood bullying.

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources including videos and self-test multiple choice questions to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

Anderson, C.A., Gentile, D.A., & Buckley, K.E. (2007). *Violent video game effects on children and adolescents: Theory, research, and public policy*. New York: Oxford University Press. The authors discuss the trend in which the effects of violent media on real-life violence appear to be getting stronger over time. They argue that this effect may be due to the increasing intensity and realism of violent content in video games, in which people are not merely witnesses but active participants.

Brownmiller, S. (1975). *Against our will: Men, women, and rape*. New York: Fawcett Books. Susan Brownmiller's work has been extremely influential in the social psychological study of gendered violence. Written in the heyday of the feminist movement in the 1970s, the writing remains fresh and controversial.

Graham, K., & Homel, R. (2008). *Raising the bar: Preventing aggression in and around bars, pubs and clubs*. Cullompton: Willan. Readable book that applies the lessons of social psychology, sociology, policing and criminology to the problem of reducing aggression in the real-life context of pubs and clubs.

Malley-Morrison, K., McCarthy, S., & Hines, D. (Eds.). (2012). *International handbook of war, torture, and terrorism*. New York: Springer. Comprehensive, interdisciplinary collection of essays from leading international experts on the psychology of war and intergroup aggression. Will broaden and deepen your understanding of the social psychology of international conflict, and reveals how social psychological insights and discoveries dovetail with developments in other academic disciplines.

Pinker, S. (2011). *The better angels of our nature: The decline of violence in history and its causes*. London: Penguin. Steven Pinker is an engaging writer. He presents a strong case that violence has become much less frequent through history, as a result of increases in the rule of law, education and cosmopolitanism. He suggests that these historical forces have reduced aggression principally by helping people to empathize with others and to see aggression as wrong. In this respect, he is a modern-day descendant of Hobbes, who, you may recall, discussed how modern civilization has rescued human beings from the barbarous state of nature.

CHAPTER

14 ALTRUISM AND JUSTICE

In this chapter, we examine some of the positive aspects of social behaviour, considering what leads people to perform acts of kindness and generosity towards others. First, we consider how people make sacrifices for the benefit of others (altruism), but also whether when doing so, people may act out of selfish motives. We consider how people respond to social dilemmas and how cooperative behaviour can be encouraged. We then outline why people defend justice and how the importance of social justice influences the way people think, feel and act towards others. By the end of this chapter, you will have a good understanding of altruism and justice.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Altruism
- Social dilemmas
- Encouraging cooperation
- The social psychology of justice

Getty Images/sarote pruksachat

Much of this book has been concerned with the worst in human nature – the defective thinking, self-centredness, mindlessness, parochialism, cruelty and violence of which we, as a species, are so capable. In doing so, the focus of this book reflects that of the discipline of social psychology, which has always been concerned with finding solutions to social problems such as aggression and prejudice. As we saw in Chapter 9, much of the impetus for experimental social psychology was provided by the Holocaust that took place during the Second World War. While Milgram, Asch and Sherif built up a theoretical and empirical edifice to try to explain the horrors of the Holocaust, Oliner and Oliner (1988) set out to document, and explain, the extraordinary acts of kindness that occurred during this darkest period of human history. In their estimate, between 50,000 and 500,000 non-Jewish people risked their own and their families' lives in Nazi-occupied Europe in order to shelter Jewish people from the death camps. For every one of these people, Oliner and Oliner estimated that ten more risked their lives to help indirectly, for example by donating food or transmitting messages.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Search popular media sites for accounts of two or more acts of individual heroism, altruism or bravery. How are these behaviours explained in the popular media accounts? Read on and see how these popular explanations compare with those developed by social psychologists.

As social psychologists, we are interested in what leads so many people to perform these amazing acts of kindness. In this chapter, our concern is how to realize some of the best, noblest impulses of human beings – to make sacrifices in order to help others and to love and defend justice. To some extent, then, this is where social psychology intersects with **positive psychology** – a humanistic tradition that focuses on the best aspects of human nature and experience rather than the worst (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive psychology A movement within psychology that emphasizes how positive aspects of human nature and experience can be enhanced. It is informed by the philosophical position of humanism, which assumes that human nature is ultimately good.

Although generosity and striving for justice represent some of the most noble aspects of human psychology, this chapter is by no means devoid of studies that document human failings. Often, and under predictable circumstances, people do not act according to these prosocial motivations. Sometimes, these motivations ironically lead people to engage in antisocial behaviour, such as the blame and derogation of the victims of injustice. Also, we shall see how even prosocial behaviours, such as helping others, may be inspired by selfish motives, such as the desire to feel better about ourselves. The 'good' and the 'evil' in human nature appear to be more closely related than most people would normally think. In this chapter, we begin by examining the social psychological literature on altruism, in which we consider the human capacity to sacrifice one's own interests to benefit others. We then consider the importance of social justice to people and the sometimes paradoxical effect this has on the way they think, feel and act towards others.

ALTRUISM

Altruism refers to an action that is performed to benefit another person without benefiting the self. It is a more specific example of **helping behaviour**, which is an action that is performed with the explicit intention of helping another person. The key difference between the two is that unlike helping behaviour, altruistic behaviour does not benefit, and can sometimes be to the detriment of, the self. Both are examples of an even broader category of behaviour known as **prosocial behaviours**. These are behaviours that are valued by others in society – in contrast with behaviours that are antisocial.

Altrusim An action that is performed to benefit a person without benefiting the self.

Helping behaviour An action that is performed to help another person.

Prosocial behaviour An action that is positively valued by society.

Getty Images/Monkey Business Images

Two great puzzles have motivated research on human altruism. First, it is unclear why human beings are as altruistic as they are. The science of economics has long been built on the assumption that people pursue their own interests, selecting courses of action according to whether they maximize benefits and minimize costs to themselves. This notion of self-interest is at the heart of capitalism (e.g., Buchholz, 2009; Smith, [1759]2007), which for some time has been the dominant mode of political and economic organization worldwide (Hall & Soskice, 2001). However, if we accept this notion, it is not obvious why people would act in defiance of their own self-interest in order to help other people. In particular, one puzzling finding is that lower income individuals tend to give more money to charity than high-income earners (Greve, 2009; Piff, Kraus, Cheng & Keltner, 2010; Piff & Robinson, 2017) (see Figure 14.1). Why would they do this? Similarly, evolutionary biologists have struggled to explain altruistic behaviour, which poses a threat to the survival of an individual organism for the benefit of other organisms – even organisms with which it may be competing to survive and reproduce. These major intellectual traditions tend to assume that individuals must be supremely selfish.

Conversely, although people are sometimes helpful in ways that are hard to relate to dominant understandings of human nature, historians and social psychologists alike have documented many cases in which people have shown a shocking failure to help others, even in ways that would cost them very little and even in circumstances where failure to help has potentially lethal consequences. These examples confound our commonsense understanding of people as possessing empathy, conscience and a desire to do

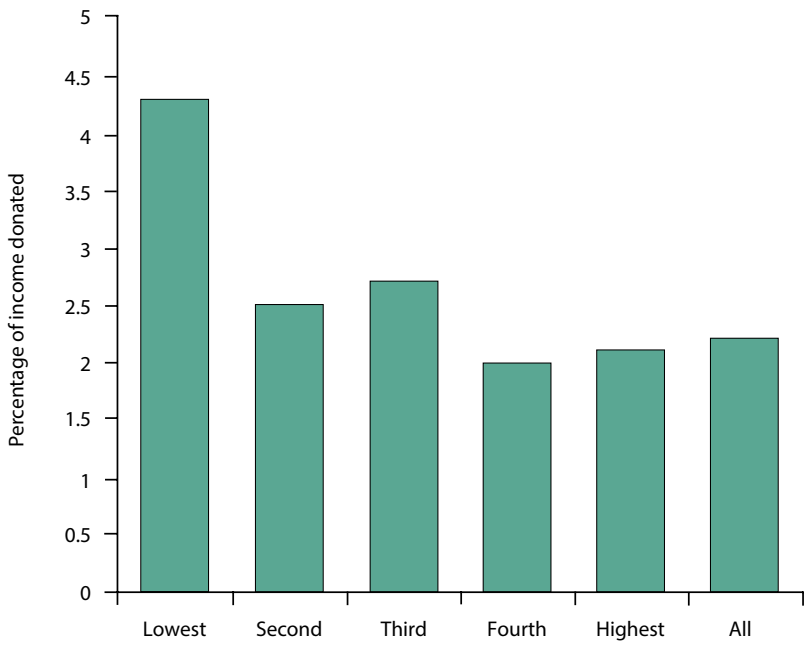

FIGURE 14.1 Income level and giving to charity Findings suggest that those with the lowest levels of income give proportionally more to charity than high-income earners. For example, the figures show that the lowest income earners (earning an average of $10,531 per year) gave 4.3 per cent of their salary to charity, whereas the highest income earners (earning an average of $158,888 per year) gave only 2.1 per cent. The national average was 2.2 per cent.

Source: Greve (2009)

the right thing. They also pose a practical problem for social psychologists whose collective job, arguably, is to employ psychological methods and concepts in order to improve socially valued outcomes such as helping behaviour.

TIME TO REFLECT

Why are the poor the most charitable when this does not fulfil human self-serving tendencies?

The study of altruism has focused on three key themes. First, there has been extensive study of bystander intervention. Second, there has been a lot of research on the situational and dispositional determinants of helping behaviour more generally. Third, there has been a great deal of research on helping behaviour in the context of social dilemmas, where people must decide either to help themselves or to help the collective of which they are a part.

Bystander intervention

When people witness the suffering of others, they have two basic choices – to help or do nothing. Under what circumstances do they help? Social psychologists' interest in altruism was captured by the phenomenon of **bystander intervention**. Research on bystander intervention was triggered by a tragic and shocking case in which it appeared that many people chose to do nothing while a woman was raped and murdered right outside their homes.

Bystander intervention The act of helping a person in danger or distress by people who are not its cause.

In 1964, at about 3.15am on a cold New York night, Kitty Genovese drove back to her apartment block after a night working as a manager of a bar in Queens. While walking from her car to the building, she was brutally stabbed by a complete stranger, who left the scene, only to return ten minutes later to rape and kill her in a stairwell. Media reports of the attack caused an outrage, not least because it was reported that some 38 residents in nearby apartment buildings heard her cries for help and witnessed the attack but did nothing, not even taking the trouble to call the police. As we shall see, the numbers of witnesses, exactly what they knew about the attack and the extent of their inaction, have since been called into question. Nonetheless, so shocking was the apparent inaction of the bystanders that, in the popular press and in social psychology alike, its significance came to overshadow the appalling and apparently sexually motivated murder itself (e.g., Latane & Darley, 1968). The alleged failure of these 38 witnesses to act became an emblem of the all-too-frequent failure of bystanders to intervene. Further, it inspired a plethora of studies that demonstrated the failure of bystanders to intervene in a number of simulated emergencies (Manning, Levine & Collins, 2007).

These studies also yielded valuable insights into the reasons underlying the apathy of bystanders, and the factors that encourage bystander intervention. The first experimental research into bystander intervention in the wake of the Kitty Genovese case was conducted by Darley and Latane (1968). Participants were seated in rooms alone and communicated with other participants through an intercom. One 'participant' was actually a confederate of the experimenters, who during the experiment pretended to have a seizure, asked for help and then began to choke. Participants believed that just they, one other participant, or four other participants could hear the emergency unfolding. The dependent variable was whether the participant made an attempt to help the confederate. As Figure 14.2 shows, participants' willingness to help sharply declined as the number of other bystanders increased. Further, participants hesitated for much longer as group size increased.

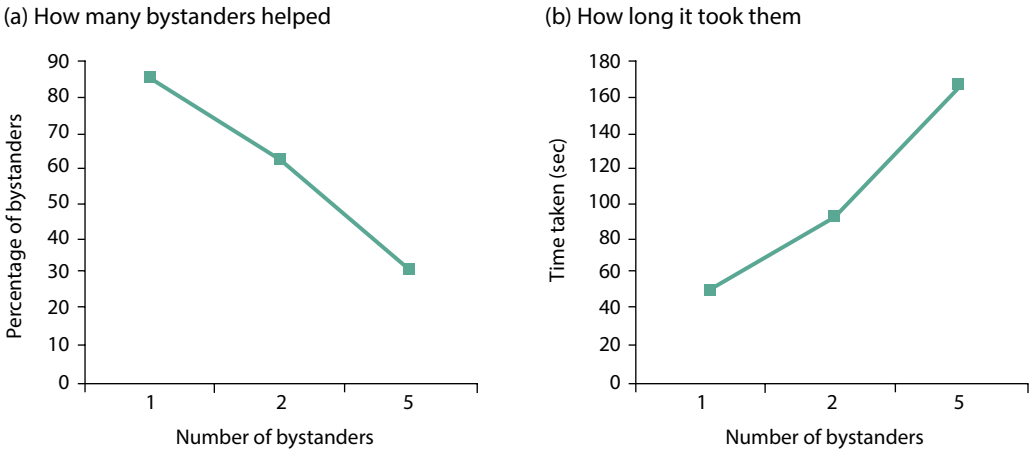

FIGURE 14.2 Bystander intervention depends on the number of bystanders The number of bystanders who helped in Darley and Latane's (1968) experiment (a), and how long it took them to begin helping (b), as a function of the number of bystanders (including themselves) they believed were witnessing the emergency.

Source: Data from Darley and Latane (1968)

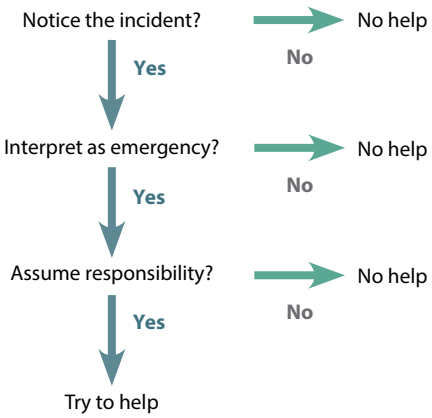

FIGURE 14.3 Decision model of bystander intervention Latane and Darley argued that, at any point in time, the presence of other bystanders creates distractions or diversions that inhibit people from helping.

Source: Latane and Darley (1968). Copyright © 1968 by the American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

Why does the presence of other bystanders stop people from helping? Latane and Darley (1968) thought that as the number of bystanders increased, people were less likely to notice the incident, less likely to interpret it as a problem at all and less likely to assume responsibility for taking action (see Figure 14.3).

More specifically, this adverse effect of group size points to the notion that bystander intervention is impaired by the **diffusion of responsibility** – the perception that 'it's none of my business' or that 'someone else will deal with this' (Darley & Latane, 1968). This is rather like the phenomenon of social loafing encountered in Chapter 10, where you are likely to pull harder in a tug-of-war if it is just you against one other person than if you are in a large team. Other studies have shown that another reason why bystanders fail to intervene is **pluralistic ignorance** – the situation where people wrongly assume, based on others' actions, that they endorse a particular norm (Latane & Rodin, 1969; Prentice & Miller, 1996). In other words, if you observe others standing by doing nothing about an unfolding emergency, you may wrongly infer that they believe intervention is not necessary. The problem is, they may be committing the same error, and inferring from your inaction that you think intervention is not necessary. In the worst-case scenario, the collective effect of this fallacy is that nobody does anything. Latane and Darley (1968) demonstrated this by pumping large quantities of smoke into a room in which participants were completing questionnaires (see Figure 14.4). When participants were alone in the room, 75 per cent of them reported the smoke. When the room contained three participants, only 38 per cent reported the smoke. When the room contained the participant and two passive confederates, just 10 per cent reported the smoke.

Diffusion of responsibility One explanation why bystanders do not intervene is the perception that someone else will.

Pluralistic ignorance The phenomenon whereby people wrongly assume, based on others' actions, that they endorse a particular norm.

Still other studies implicate further barriers to bystander intervention. If people are in a hurry, they help less, perhaps because they are less likely even to notice the emergency (Darley & Batson, 1973). Even if they do notice an emergency unfolding, motivated cognition processes may kick in that are designed to minimize anxiety and distress (as we saw in Chapters 2, 3 and 4). This means, for example, that people are sometimes inclined to interpret emergencies in ways that downplay their seriousness, just as some of the witnesses in the Kitty Genovese case assumed that a domestic dispute or minor assault was occurring (Wilson & Petruska, 1984).

FIGURE 14.4 Where there's smoke, there's pluralistic ignorance Latane and Darley (1968) conducted an experiment where a large amount of smoke was pumped into a room while participants were completing a questionnaire. When in the room alone, 75 per cent of participants reported the smoke, compared to 38 per cent when there were two other participants and only 10 per cent when they were in the room with two unresponsive confederates.

Conversely, research has uncovered factors that promote bystander intervention. Groups of individuals who have drunk alcohol (Steele, Critchlow & Liu, 1985), or who are friends (Rutkowski, Gruder & Romer, 1983), are less inhibited about intervening. Bystanders are more likely to help if they believe those around them are willing to intervene, particularly if these bystanders are 'ingroup' as opposed to 'outgroup' (Levine, Cassidy, Brazier & Reicher, 2002). A meta-analysis of over 100 studies by Fischer et al. (2011) confirmed that though helping is reliably decreased as the number of bystanders increases, this effect is reduced when the situation presents a physical threat, when perpetrators responsible for that threat are present and when helpers run the risk of being physically harmed. Fischer et al. argue that such dangerous situations are readily interpreted as emergencies, removing a critical barrier to helping. They also argue that such situations provoke enough arousal to overcome their inhibitions.

Although Fischer et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis clearly established that the bystander intervention effect is robust, there is controversy over the facts of the Kitty Genovese case and the mark it has made on social psychological thinking about altruism, as we shall now see in the Critical Focus box.

CRITICAL FOCUS

Bystander intervention and the tragic case of Kitty Genovese

In a review article, Manning, Levine and Collins (2007) examined the role the Kitty Genovese story has played in social psychology, both in research on helping and in textbook coverage. They found that the original media reports contained inaccuracies, unsubstantiated reports and omissions, which together exaggerate the extent of bystander intervention in the Kitty Genovese case. For example:

- Despite the number of witnesses (38) cited in media reports, no list of these was ever made.
- The public prosecutor in the case could find only about six witnesses who saw what was going on with enough clarity to use them to testify.
- The first and second attack on Kitty Genovese took place in different locations, meaning that few people could have seen the whole episode and understood its magnitude.
- Trial witnesses reported that they believed they were witnessing the aftermath of an assault, rather than a stabbing.
- Witnesses later claimed that they or others had reported the first attack to the police. At the time, there was no emergency number (911) system in place. Police had a reputation for hostile or indifferent responses to some emergency calls, and received many calls for affrays associated with a bar on the street on which Kitty Genovese was murdered. After the attack, the emergency call system was reformed.
- The murderer left the scene after one witness had shouted out of his window to scare him off.
- The attack occurred after 3am, when people had their windows closed and were unlikely to be able to identify the noises they might have heard as a cry for help. All this in an inner-city street accustomed to disturbances in the middle of the night.

However tragic, lamentable and even inexcusable the inaction of some local residents may have been, there is no evidence that a large number of people were

aware of what was happening to Kitty Genovese but did nothing. Ironically, Manning et al. (2007) describe the Kitty Genovese story, as it was reported, as 'a stubborn and intractable urban myth' (p. 561), which, for them, 'makes its continued presence at the heart of the social psychology of helping even more unfortunate'. In a similarly critical review of the Kitty Genovese 'myth', Kassin (2017) points out an 'irony that has slipped through the cracks' (p. 379): Genovese's killer was ultimately arrested because of the intervention of two strangers. Five days later, they noticed him attempting to burgle a property, disabled his car and called the police.

In addition, Manning et al. (2007) argue that despite the undoubted quality and importance of the research on bystander intervention, which media reports of this case inspired, those reports have also contributed to a biased view of helping behaviour in social psychology:

> We suggest that, almost from its inception, the story of the 38 witnesses became a kind of modern parable – the antonym of the parable of the good Samaritan. Whereas the good Samaritan parable venerates the individual who helps while others walk by, the story of the 38 witnesses in psychology tells of the malign influence of others to overwhelm the will of the individual. The power of the story comes from the moral lesson about the dangers of the group and how the presence of others can undermine the bonds of neighborly concern. We argue that the repeated telling of the parable of the 38 witnesses has served to curtail the imaginative space of helping research in social psychology. (p. 555)

What Manning et al. (2007) mean is that the effect of the mistold Kitty Genovese story has been to constrain the way researchers, textbook authors and students of social psychology think about helping behaviour. The notion that people are unwilling to help, especially when in the presence of others, has taken an undue hold on social psychological thinking. It has caused less attention to be paid to the possibility that under some conditions, the presence of others, especially when those others comprise a meaningful 'group', may be a boon to bystander intervention and helping behaviour more generally.

Indeed, Levine and Crowther (2008) argued that under some circumstances, group size may actually increase helping behaviour. When people in a bystander situation feel that helping is normative – the expected, normal thing to do – they are more likely to help. For example, friends are accustomed to helping and supporting each other, and so when the other bystanders are your friends, rather than strangers, a norm of helping is likely to be more salient to you. Likewise, when the victim is an ingroup rather than an outgroup member, the norm that one helps other ingroup members (see Chapter 11) may be reinforced by the presence of other bystanders who belong to the same group. Thus, the presence of bystanders who are friends and who, like you, share group membership with the victim may actually increase bystander intervention. Levine and Crowther conducted studies to test these predictions and found they were supported. In one study, British undergraduates indicated they would be more likely to help in a bystander intervention scenario if they were with a group of five *friends* rather than just one friend. Conversely, echoing the Latane and Darley (1968) findings, participants indicated they would be less likely to help when in the presence of five *strangers* as opposed to one. In another study, increasing the group size of women led to increased helping of a female confederate, whereas increasing the group size of men did not.

Levine and Crowther were not the first to demonstrate that the presence of others can promote helping. In a rather extreme version of the bystander intervention paradigm, Harari, Harari and White (1985) staged a simulated rape in the corner of a car park. They found that male bystanders were significantly more likely to intervene when they were accompanied by other men than when they were alone. Presumably, in some situations where it might be dangerous for people to act alone, they feel empowered to intervene by the presence of other people, whose help they might be able to recruit.

Manning et al. (2007) point out a lesson that can be drawn about social psychology more generally from bystander research. One way of doing social psychology is not only to test hypotheses derived from a particular theoretical argument and accept or reject the argument accordingly, but also to think about each argument as being balanced by an opposing position. As we saw in Chapter 1, this is what Billig (1987) calls a *rhetorical* approach to social psychology, in which knowledge of the subject is understood as the balance of opposing arguments. In principle, each argument has an opposite. It can enrich our understanding enormously if we are prepared at least to entertain the opposite of our position. So, Manning et al. (2007) write: 'In the helping tradition, the argument that groups inhibit helping should be haunted by the possibility (at least) of the opposite – that groups can facilitate

helping' (p. 561). Among other benefits, this helps us clarify the scope of our ideas and identify cases where opposing arguments hold – as in Levine and Crowther's (2008) studies.

More generally, here we have another case in which, throughout the 1950s and 60s, when many of the most important breakthroughs were being made in social psychology, there was a strong tendency to assume that groups were a pernicious influence on society. Not only in the case of altruism but also in the literatures on aggression, prejudice and decision making, groups were seen to corrupt or override the rationality and morality of the individual. More recently, in particular since the advent of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), social psychologists have paid more careful attention to the positive, facilitating and enabling effect that groups can have on our lives. Thus, if we apply the terms of Billig's (1987) rhetorical framework, the generally unspoken sentiment that 'groups are bad' is now being balanced by more attention to the opposite assertion that 'groups are good'. Both sentiments capture important aspects of social life but neither can be said to be entirely true or entirely false.

Questions

1. Entertaining an opposite view to many of the claims you encounter helps you think critically and creatively about the limits of an idea. Are there situations in which you could obtain completely different results than have been obtained in the article you have just read, for example? Find and read an article and try it for yourself. It may also help you find studies and theories in the literature that draw different conclusions.
2. Read the article by Harari, Harari and White (1985). We invite you to reflect on the ethics of this experiment, based on the ethical principles discussed in Chapter 1.
3. Kassin (2017) provides a fascinating account of other events surrounding the Kitty Genovese case that have largely escaped public knowledge. For example, during questioning, Genovese's murderer (Winston Moseley) confessed to another murder for which a man was already being held at the time. The confession was ignored and the man served several years in prison before eventually being exonerated. The fixation on the (in)action of bystanders rather than the case itself appears to have originated from a comment by the NYPD police commissioner to the press at this same time. Kassim argues that this may have been a ploy to deflect attention away from the inconvenient ambiguity raised by the other murder and Moseley's confession. Take some time to read this interesting article which raises further questions about the case that created the bystander effect. In Kassin's analysis, the Kitty Genovese story is a parable about the efforts of authorities to distort the truth and avoid accountability.
4. Advances in communication technology have given rise to 'cyberbullying' – the act of engaging in intentional aggression online. Research suggests that people are less likely to intervene against bullying when it occurs online compared to offline (Barlińska, Szuster & Winiewski, 2013). Why do you think this is the case? (Hint: think about how many people could possibly intervene online vs. offline.) How might it be possible to encourage people to intervene against cyberbullying?

Determinants of altruism

Helpfulness is not only important in the case of emergency bystander situations. In a host of other situations and in other ways, we can choose whether or not to help, for example by donating to the needy, offering support to family members or friends going through difficult times, or volunteering time to work for charitable causes. A great deal of research has examined what causes people to offer these kinds of help. The research has centred around three key questions. First, is the personality or the situation a more important determinant of helping behaviour? Second, in what sense (if any) is helping behaviour truly altruistic, designed to help with no thought for any benefit to the helper? And third, might the human willingness to help under some circumstances have evolved?

Personality and situational factors that give rise to helping

Some of the early research on altruism was inspired by a sliver of light that emerged from the moral darkness of the Second World War. Specifically, what caused some individuals to risk their own lives in order to shelter Jewish people from the Holocaust,

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while others did nothing to intervene or even collaborated with the Nazis (Oliner, 2004)? These stark differences between people in their response to the Holocaust led early thinkers to postulate that there must be some important personality variables at play. Theory and research were devoted to determining whether there was such a thing as an 'altruistic personality', that is, a stable psychological makeup that predisposes people to help others.

Research attention was also paid to finding out what traits might make up this altruistic personality (Oliner & Oliner, 1988; Rushton, 1980; Rushton, Chrisjohn & Fekken, 1981; Staub, 1978). Much of the research involved correlational studies in which researchers attempted to find relationships between personality characteristics, other individual factors and helpful behaviours. The following have been identified:

Machiavellianism Individual differences variable associated with the tendency to manipulate others for personal gain.

Belief in a just world The belief that the world is a just place in which people get what they deserve.

1. **Machiavellianism**: this personality trait is associated with a willingness and preparedness to exploit or manipulate others in the pursuit of one's own goals. As we might expect, it is negatively correlated with willingness to help – as Machiavellianism goes up, helping goes down (McHoskey, 1999).
2. The **belief in a just world**: people who believe the world is a just place in which people get what they deserve are, in some cases, more inclined to help others (Bègue, 2014). However, the belief in a just world may only encourage helping behaviour among people who are awaiting an important outcome for themselves. Under such conditions, people may help others, guided by a superstitious and probably unconscious belief that doing so will help them. This was exactly what Zuckerman (1975) observed. University students who scored high on a scale measuring the strength of just world beliefs were more likely to help (e.g., by volunteering to participate in experiments or act as a reader for a blind student) than those who scored low on the same scale. However, this difference only emerged shortly before their examinations and was not present in the middle of term (Zuckerman, 1975). In general, the belief in a just world is likely to discourage people from doing wrong or failing in moral duties (Hafer, 2000; Sutton & Winnard, 2007), but is less likely to encourage people to help when they do not feel they have a strong obligation to do so (Dalbert, 1999; Strelan & Sutton, 2011).

3 **Empathy**: people are more helpful when they empathize with a victim who is in need of help. This involves taking the perspective of the victim, and is associated with emotional reactions such as compassion, tenderness, soft-heartedness and sympathy, which together can be termed **empathic concern** (Batson & Shaw, 1991). Personality psychologists have shown that people who are generally prone to empathic concern tend be able to take the perspective of others, and also to be more helpful across situations (Bierhoff, Klein & Kramp, 1991; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; see Batson, 2016 for an overview). For example, people who score high on empathy tend to donate to charity more (Davis, 1983) and take the place of a person who is engaging in an upsetting task (Carlo, Eisenberg, Troyer, Switzer & Speer, 1991). Individual differences in empathy and perspective-taking show up in childhood (Knight, Johnson, Carlo & Eisenberg, 1994) and develop throughout adolescence (Van der Graaf et al., 2014), and are argued to have some genetic basis.

Empathy The ability of people to take the perspective of others.

Empathic concern An emotional reaction to the suffering of others which results from taking their perspective, and which is thought by many researchers to motivate helping behaviour.

4 **Moral reasoning**: the extent to which a person's willingness to help is a function of their own needs versus overarching moral standards (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). People who use higher level reasoning to solve moral dilemmas tend to show greater empathy and altruism. For example, children who watched a video of an injured child and were then given the opportunity to play with some toys, or organize toys to be sent to a hospital, chose the latter option more to the extent that they used higher level moral reasoning (Miller, Eisenberg, Fabes & Shell, 1996). There is also some evidence from a six-year longitudinal study involving children that moral reasoning interacts with feelings of sympathy to predict altruistic behaviour (Malti et al., 2016).

Moral reasoning The extent to which people compare their own needs with overarching moral standards.

5 Widened feelings of responsibility: Oliner and Oliner (1988) argued that **extensivity** is a characteristic of helpful people. Part of extensivity is a person's sense that they are obligated to help not just those in their immediate social circle, such as close friends and family, but also those more distant from themselves. Einolf (2010; see also an alternative, refined measure by Crimston, Bain, Hornsey & Bastian, 2016) developed a measure of extensivity (see the Exploring Further feature below) and found scores to be associated with helping behaviours such as donations of time and money to various causes (see Crimston, Hornsey, Bain & Bastian, 2018). Later in this chapter, we will encounter a related idea, namely Opotow's (1990) concept of moral inclusion and exclusion. We all consider some beings as worthy of moral regard, who have moral rights and who can be wronged. We differ in how closely to ourselves we draw the line – at the ingroup, at certain outgroups, at humans or at animals more generally (for a review see Crimston, et al., 2018).

Extensivity A person's sense that they are obligated to help others, both close and distant.

6 Religiosity: in some research, religious beliefs have been associated with more altruistic behaviour. For example, Hansen, Vandenberg and Patterson (1995) showed that university students who described themselves as more religious spent more time volunteering with various university organizations. However, this is not a straightforward relationship. A large study of 70 national samples revealed that in countries with no social pressure to follow a religion, religious people were typically more altruistic (e.g., engaged in more charity work, engaged in less fraudulent activity) than non-religious people. However, these findings were much weaker with increasing levels of social enforcement of religion (Stavrova & Siegers, 2014). Other findings suggest that religiosity is not always associated with increased altruism. Jackson and Esses (1997) found that people holding strong conservative religious beliefs (e.g., fundamentalists) were likely to help some people, but not others. Their willingness to help was determined by perceived deservingness of help. Specifically, people were likely to help those they felt were deserving, but not those whose behaviour went against their religious beliefs (e.g., homosexuals) (see also Batson, Floyd, Meyer & Winner, 1999; Skitka & Tetlock, 1993). Family religious identification may also play

a part. In one study, children from religious families across six different countries (Canada, China, Jordan, Turkey, the USA and South Africa) were less likely to display altruistic behaviours than non-religious children and were also harsher in their punitive tendencies (Decety et al., 2015).

7 Gender: findings suggest that men and women differ considerably in their likelihood of helping in various types of situations (Becker & Eagly, 2004; Eagly, 1987). For example, men tend to show more acts of altruism than women in situations where heroism and bravery are involved (e.g., saving someone from a fire) and this finding generalizes across cultures (Johnson et al., 1989). One explanation for these gender differences comes from an evolutionary perspective. Specifically, Kelly and Dunbar (2001) argue that women prefer men who are brave over those who are less brave – men are aware of this preference and are therefore motivated to act bravely. On the other hand, women appear to be more likely to help in situations that call for long-term care and volunteering (Becker & Eagly, 2004). However, gender differences like these can also be explained in terms of socially constructed norms and gender roles. For example, Rand, Brescoli, Everett, Capraro and Barcelo (2016) argued that women are expected to behave altruistically and are punished for failing to do so, to a much greater extent than men.

8 Mood: research suggests that both positive and negative moods can lead to helping. For example, if people are put into a good mood by being offered a biscuit (Isen & Levin, 1972) or listening to uplifting music (North, Tarrant & Hargreaves, 2004), they tend to be more helpful. These findings suggest that people act altruistically in order to maintain a positive mood. Thus, people who are in a good mood may help in order not to have their mood 'brought down' by others' suffering (Wegener & Petty, 1994). Perhaps, people in a good mood focus more generally on the positives rather than the negatives, which leads to increased helping. Or, being in a good mood may make people more aware of their values (e.g., Batson et al., 1999). This may all sound good, but other findings suggest that bad moods can increase altruistic behaviour (Regan, Williams & Sparling, 1972). As we will see later, people who are made to feel guilty are more likely to help (J.W. Regan, 1971). One reason why this may occur is because being in a bad mood makes people more motivated to make up for whatever happened to induce the negative feeling. However, as we will also see later, sometimes being in a bad mood can make people less altruistic. In particular, being ostracized makes people less likely to want to help (Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco & Bartels, 2007).

9 Having positive role models: some findings suggest that people are more altruistic if they have witnessed altruistic behaviour from role models such as parents and peers (e.g., Ruggeri, Luan, Keller & Gummerum, 2018; Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio & Piliavin, 1995). Seeing others perform helping behaviour provides people with strong examples of how to behave and reinforces positive prosocial norms and the social value of helping. For example, Bryan and Test (1967) showed that people were ten times more likely to stop for a woman with a flat tyre on the side of the road if a quarter of a mile earlier they saw someone being helped in a similar situation.

EXPLORING FURTHER

How extensive are you? Indicate your feelings of obligation to perform each of the behaviours below (0 = no obligation at all, 10 = a very great obligation). Compare your scores with the means reported by Einolf (2010).

Variable	Question	Mean	Standard
Drop plans for child	To drop your plans when your children seem very troubled?	8.9	1.8
Contact child	To call, write, or visit your adult children on a regular basis?	7.8	2.3
Take child in home	To take your divorced or unemployed adult child back into your home?	7.4	2.6
Call parents	To call your parents on a regular basis?	8.0	2.5
Drop plans for spouse	To drop your plans when your spouse seems very troubled?	8.6	2.3
Raise friend's child	To raise the child of a close friend if the friend died?	7.2	2.7
Take friend in home	To take a friend into your home who could not afford to live alone?	6.1	2.7
Give money to friend	To give money to a friend in need, even if this made it hard to meet your own needs?	6.4	2.6
Do more on job	To do more than most people would do on your kind of job?	8.0	2.0
Work hard	To work hard even if you didn't like or respect your employer or supervisor?	8.2	2.9
Work overtime	To cancel plans to visit friends if you were asked, but not required, to work overtime?	6.7	2.6
Vote	To vote in local and national elections?	8.0	2.7
Jury duty	To serve on a jury if called?	7.2	3.0
Stay informed	To keep fully informed about national news and public issues?	7.1	2.4
Testify in court	To testify in court about an accident you witnessed?	8.0	2.2
Volunteer or donate	To volunteer time or money to social causes you support?	6.3	2.6
Vote for redistributive tax	To vote for a law that would help others worse off than you but would increase your taxes?	5.4	2.9
Pay more for health care	To pay more for your health care so that everyone had access to health care?	5.8	2.9
Collect money for charity	To collect contributions for heart or cancer research if asked to do so?	5.8	2.9

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However, there are also situational factors that determine helping behaviour, such as culture and similarity, which we discuss briefly here:

1 Culture: the likelihood of helping behaviour differs significantly across cultures. Levine, Norenzayan and Philbrick (2001) examined three types of helping behaviour in 23 different countries – assisting a blind person across the street, picking up a dropped pen and picking up magazines for an injured person. They found that helping behaviour was strongest in Brazil (100 per cent, 100 per cent and 80 per cent for the different scenarios respectively), followed by Costa Rica, Malawi and India. Malaysia was at the bottom (53 per cent, 26 per cent and 41 per cent for the different scenarios respectively), with the USA a close second last, and Singapore in third last place. One factor that appears to determine cultural differences in altruism is productivity. Specifically, countries in which people earn more actually help less. Those who witness economic deprivation more often are perhaps more able to empathize with others and thus help more. Religion could also be a factor in determining cultural differences in helping behaviour (see earlier comments). Differences may also be the result of

different cultural norms for helping behaviour. For example, cultures differ with respect to the norm of reciprocity (Miller & Bersoff, 1994), with some countries such as the USA seeing reciprocity as a matter of choice, but others seeing it as a matter of obligation. We will return to culture throughout this chapter, especially when we discuss the topic of justice.

2 Similarity: as you learned in Chapter 7, similarity is a significant factor in determining who we like. It is probably not surprising therefore that people are also more empathic and helpful towards people who are similar to them (Miller, Kozu & Davis, 2001; Sturmer, Snyder, Kropp & Siem, 2006). For example, students who have been through a romantic breakup feel more empathy for someone who has had a similar experience (Batson et al., 1996). People are more likely to help those who are similar in dress, nationality and various attitudes (Dovidio & Morris, 1975; Holloway, Tucker & Hornstein, 1977). DeBruine (2002) morphed participants' faces with strangers' faces to make a composite face and found that participants were more generous to the composite face rather than the stranger's face, presumably because it was more similar to the self. One important type of similarity relates to the groups we belong to. For example, in a study by Levine, Prosser, Evans and Reicher (2005), Manchester United football supporters completed a series of questionnaires and were then asked to walk to a different part of the building to complete the next part of the study. As they walked down a hallway, they saw another person (a confederate) slip and fall, appearing to have hurt their ankle. In one condition, the person was wearing a Manchester United jersey, in another condition they wore a Liverpool jersey (a rival football team) and in a control condition, the victim wore a generic shirt with no name on it. Levine et al. then examined whether the participants stopped to help the person. As they expected, participants were more likely to help someone who was wearing a Manchester United jersey rather than either of the others. Specifically, 92 per cent of those wearing the Manchester United jersey were helped, in comparison with 33 per cent of those wearing Liverpool shirts and 30 per cent with no-name shirts. Ingroup similarity is therefore a key factor in determining a person's willingness to help another.

3 The power of the situation: guided by the prevailing notion of 'the power of the situation' that had led social psychologists to examine how normal people could perform monstrous acts (e.g., Milgram, 1965; see Chapter 9), researchers in the 1970s began to examine how social situations could lead people to help or not, whatever their character. As we have seen, one strand of this research focused on bystander intervention. Other lines of research examined what might drive individuals to help in more private settings. In one study, participants were led to believe that the experiment in which they were taking part had been ruined (J.W. Regan, 1971). Half the participants were also led to believe that this was their fault. Compared to control participants, they subsequently donated more to a charity. Later, Regan, Williams and Sparling (1972) replicated this effect under more realistic conditions in a field experiment. Female shoppers were approached by a male experimenter who asked if they could take his photograph. The camera failed to work. The experimenter led half the women to think *they* had broken the camera (this was the experimental condition), and the control group of women to believe it was not their fault. Soon afterwards, a female experimenter walked across the women's path, carrying a broken shopping bag from which groceries were spilling. Over half (55 per cent) of the women in the experimental group went out of their way to tell her, whereas only 15 per cent of control group women did. Apparently, the incidental experience of guilt was powerful enough to more than triple the incidence of altruism. These experiments turned out to be replicable – a meta-analysis of four studies has shown its effects to be robust (Boster, Cruz, Manata, DeAngelis & Zhuang, 2016). They have also shaped later research on helping behaviour in two key ways. First,

they demonstrated the power of the situation to shape helping behaviour. As a result, most researchers since have taken an experimental approach, examining the situational factors that influence helping. Second, they seemed to show that people help others for a selfish reason – to make themselves feel better. Much of the research has followed up this paradoxical result.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Use a search engine or database such as PsycINFO to find some recent research on personality traits and individual differences associated with prosocial behaviour.

Altruism: inspired by empathy or more selfish motives?

Some researchers, most notably Cialdini (1991) and Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce and Neuberg (1997), reached an unsettling conclusion – if people help others in order to help themselves, there may be no such thing as 'true' or 'pure' altruism, which is supposed to have no thought for the self. In direct contrast, other researchers, most notably Batson (1987) and Batson and Shaw (1991), sought to show that at least sometimes, people are truly motivated to help others with no regard for themselves (see Batson, 2016 for a review). In particular, Batson argued that helping behaviour is sometimes motivated purely by empathic concern for the welfare of others. According to this **empathy-altruism hypothesis**, some helpful actions are genuinely motivated by a desire to do something good for someone else.

Empathy-altruism hypothesis
Hypothesis that when people feel empathy for others, they will be more likely to help that person at a personal cost to the self.

This controversy over whether there is such a thing as truly unselfish empathic helping generated many research and review papers. Both sides of the debate seemed to gain some support from research findings. For example, an early study of the 'empathy' view showed that helping behaviour increased after participants were asked directly to take the perspective of the victim (Toi & Batson, 1982). Other studies seemed to suggest that both empathic concern and selfish motives have a role to play. This is consistent with Batson's (1991) view of altruism, because he admits that selfish motives can be important. Where Batson differs from Cialdini is that he argues that under the right conditions, purely selfless altruism will also emerge, whereas Cialdini (1991) argues that there is always some kind of self-interest involved in a decision to help.

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One study that seemed to uncover a mixture of selfless and selfish motives for altruism was conducted by Carlo et al. (1991). These researchers exposed participants to a woman who seemed to be distressed as a result of reading a highly upsetting account of an assault. Two features of this situation were manipulated. First, the woman's distress seemed either to be strong or weak. Second, participants' ability to escape from the situation was varied. In the easy-escape condition, participants were told that they could choose not to watch any more of the woman's suffering. In the difficult-escape condition, they were told they would have to watch the woman read 15 upsetting assault accounts. As we might expect from Cialdini's (1991) approach to altruism, those who could not easily escape from the situation were most helpful, especially when the woman's distress seemed to be intense. As we might expect from Batson's (1991) approach to altruism, those who had scored highly on proneness to empathy and other altruistic personality traits were especially likely to help when escape was easy. Altruistic personality traits were less powerful predictors of helping when escape was difficult. Thus, the results suggested that there are some people who are dispositionally ready to help even in distressing situations from which they could easily walk away. But, they also suggest that the situation determines when altruistic personality traits will promote helping. If situational cues are powerful enough and provide people with enough incentive to help, it does not necessarily matter whether or not they are innately helpful.

Still other studies appear to offer strong support for the hypothesis that, ultimately, it is self-interest that drives people to help others. A classic experiment conducted by Cialdini et al. (1987) is a case in point. They had participants watch an upsetting (but fictional) video about the plight of a university student who had broken both her legs and needed the help of a student, such as the participants themselves, to take lecture notes for her. To test the hypothesis that people help in order to improve their mood, they gave an experimental group of participants a pill immediately after watching the video. The pill was a placebo with no active ingredients, but participants were told that it was a mood-fixing pill – it would 'freeze' their current emotional state, meaning that it could not be changed for the next half hour or so. So, these participants had been led to believe that helping the woman in the video would not help them feel any better. Results showed that despite reporting high levels of empathic distress, participants given this mood-fixing 'drug' agreed to help the injured woman much less than control participants who might still have imagined that helping would make them feel better. Further, empathic concern no longer affected helping behaviour.

As the authors of this textbook, one of our jobs is to help you consider which of two competing arguments is more plausible in the light of mixed findings. Usually, the key to resolving apparently contradictory results is to look closely at the methods employed by different studies. Typically, you will find that a certain methodological feature causes results to go one way, and if this is changed, results go another, allowing you to make sense of mixed results and what processes might be responsible for them. Alas, this does not seem to be the case in this area of research. For example, a study much like the one by Carlo et al. (1991), set up in a similar way, produced quite different findings – empathic concern was related to helping behaviour when escape was difficult, rather than easy (Batson, Bolen, Cross & Neuringer-Benefiel, 1986). Likewise, a study employing similar methods to Cialdini et al. (1987) produced very different results, showing that leading participants to think their mood was fixed did *not* change helping behaviour (Schroeder, Dovidio, Sibicky, Matthews & Allen, 1988). We do not have an easy take-home message, therefore, about whether Batson (1991) or Cialdini (1991) are right.

However, we think we can place these different results in an overall context that makes some sense. In short, it may not matter ultimately whether people help others in order to make themselves feel better. Indeed, it may be a conceptual mistake to assume that this apparently

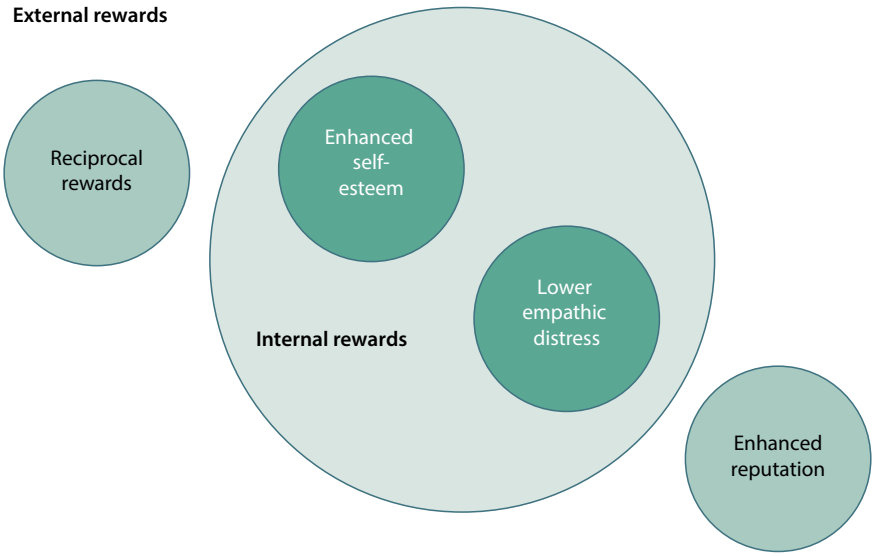

FIGURE 14.5 Simple model of the internal and external rewards of altruism If individuals are motivated by the rewards they expect to receive from the person they are helping, or from others, by gaining a positive reputation, their helping behaviour does not count as 'altruism'. A person without any built-in moral capacities, such as empathy or conscience, might help others in order to accrue such rewards. However, individuals also appear to be motivated by internal rewards, such as the prospect that their empathic distress would be relieved by helping, or that they would feel better about themselves if they helped. Such internal rewards can be seen as evidence that the normal human personality is effectively engineered to be altruistic.

'selfish' motive makes helping behaviour any less altruistic. The point is, people who help in order to make themselves feel better are pursuing an internal, rather than an external, reward. And it feels good to help only because people are equipped with deeply moral capacities. One of these moral capacities is the ability to feel empathy for the plight of others, even to experience a sense of 'oneness' with them (Cialdini et al., 1997; Maner et al., 2002). Another moral capacity we have is to respond emotionally to our own actions and their outcomes – feeling good if we help and bad if we do not, especially if we think we could have done something. Thus, we need to consider people in their entirety. If they are prepared to help others without concern for external rewards like money or reputation, they are being altruistic. If they experience internal rewards for altruistic behaviour, this is because moral capacities are ingrained in their character (see Figure 14.5).

TIME TO REFLECT

Giving presents makes us feel happy. Using the knowledge you have gained so far, can you say why this is the case?

Indeed, some thinkers such as Staub (1978) have put forward exactly this view of altruism:

> A prosocial act may be judged altruistic if it appears to have been intended to benefit others rather than to gain either material or social rewards. Altruistic prosocial acts are likely to be associated, however, with internal rewards (and the expectation of such rewards) and with empathic reinforcing experiences. (p. 10)

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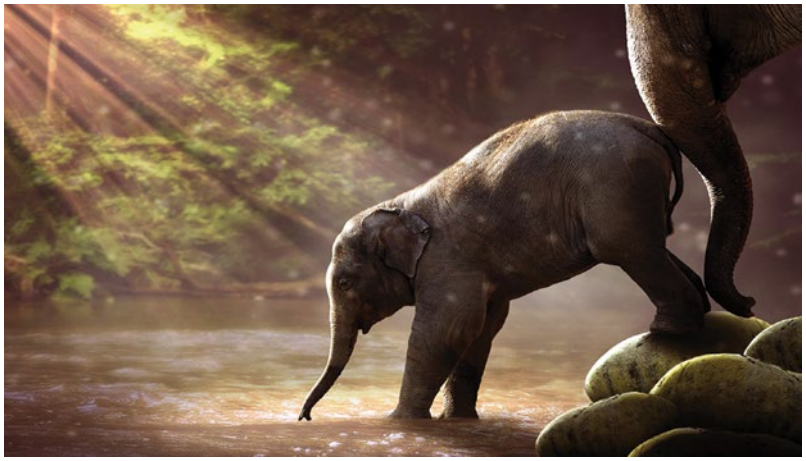

FIGURE 14.6 Altruism and sharing in nature Altruism is not a characteristic limited only to humans, but is also displayed by animals, who will call out to each other to warn of predators, share food and protect each other.

We therefore think that altruism should be defined as behaviour to help others without thought of *external reward*. The important question is not *whether* internal rewards matter – researchers generally agree that they do – but why? Why are we equipped with the moral capacities that make us willing to help others even when doing so may be costly and thankless? Many theorists have argued that evolution has played a role in this phenomenon (e.g., Bowles, 2006; Fehr & Fischbacher, 2003; Trivers, 1971; see Kurzban, Burton-Chellew & West, 2015 for a review). At first glance, this hypothesis does not make sense. If evolution favours organisms who survive long enough to reproduce and nurture their offspring, how can it cause organisms to sacrifice their own interests to help others? Intuitively, for many people at least, it would seem that uniquely human characteristics such as empathy are required in order for altruism to triumph over our innately selfish, animal nature. However, studies of animal behaviour show that they do engage in acts of altruism. Birds will incur risks by crying out a warning to nearby birds when they spot a predator, animals will share food with relatives (see Figure 14.6) or defend them from attack (Hamilton, 1963; Trivers, 1971). Chimpanzees act in much the same way as young human children and demonstrate spontaneous acts of helping and kindness towards unrelated individuals (Warneken, Hare, Melis, Hanus & Tomasello, 2007).

EXPLORING FURTHER

One interesting example of altruistic behaviour is that of volunteering – spontaneous altruism for the common good. You may be familiar with high-profile examples of volunteering, such as Taylor Swift who often supports charitable causes, for example, giving a surprise performance at the Ally Coalition benefit concert in support of LGBTQ equality in 2018. Some researchers argue that volunteering is a difficult task that should be seen as a case of genuine altruism (Clary & Snyder, 1991, 1999; Omoto & Snyder, 2002). However, people's motives for making even the grandest and most difficult humanitarian gestures are often questioned. Are even the noblest volunteers, at some level, being self-serving? Familiarize yourself with the literature on volunteerism and decide whether community volunteering can be driven by egoistic motives.

Kin selection
Acting differently towards members of the same species depending on their degree of genetic relatedness to the self. Kin selection can deter animals from mating, for example, but can encourage them to act altruistically.

The discovery of altruistic behaviour in nonhuman animals led early evolutionary theorists to identify two reasons why they, as well as humans, help each other. The first is that by helping one's relatives or kin, one is promoting the successful reproduction of one's own genes. This is because we share many of our genes with our relatives. As we discussed in Chapter 13, evolutionary theory does not entail the survival of the fittest organisms, but of the fittest genes (Dawkins, 1976). For this model, **kin selection** is important. Genes that programme animals to help their relatives will be more likely to be successfully copied. There is strong evidence that nonhuman animals are selectively altruistic towards their relatives (Clutton-Brock, 2002).

Human beings also prefer to help those who are more closely related to them (Burnstein, Crandall & Kitayama, 1994) (see Figure 14.7), and even those who are ethnically similar (Ben-Ner, 2018). However, as we have also seen, people show remarkable willingness to help even strangers.

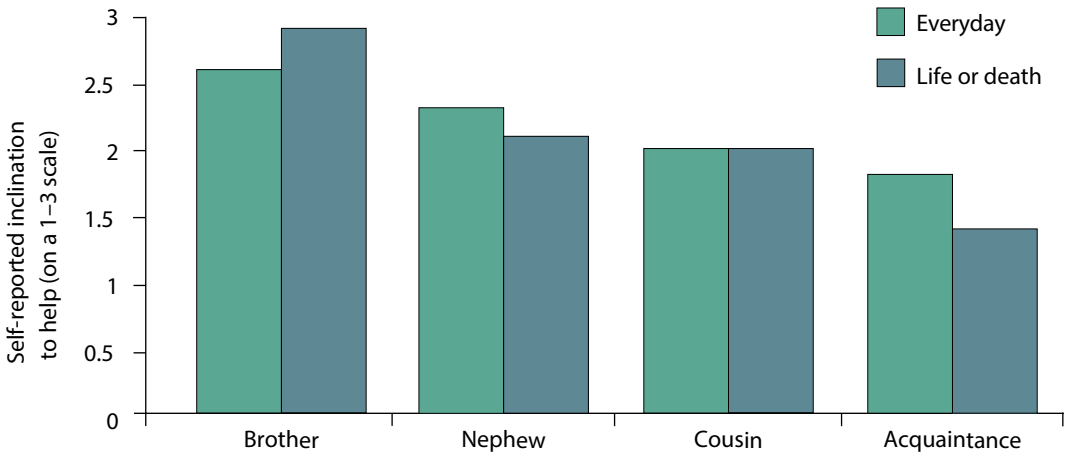

FIGURE 14.7 People are more inclined to help their relatives, especially in life or death, rather than everyday, situations

Source: Data from Burnstein et al. (1994)

The second reason why animals may make sacrifices to help each other is that their altruism may be repaid. This is the principal of **reciprocal altruism**. If animals evolve a preference to help others who will help them, and to help others who have helped them before, then the prospects of mutual survival are enhanced. Leider, Mobius, Rosenblat and Do (2009) ran a study on Facebook in which participants were able to exchange money with strangers or friends in a range of 'social dilemma' games that we will encounter later in this chapter. Predictably, participants were 52 per cent more likely to donate money to friends than strangers. This is consistent with the principle of reciprocal altruism, because friends are more likely to reciprocate one's acts of generosity than strangers. Leider et al. (2009) also manipulated whether participants expected to interact with each other in the future. This prospect of future interaction increased giving by a further 24 per cent.

Reciprocal altruism Animals act altruistically towards members of the same species that have already helped them. This principal gives animals an incentive to help other animals, because it heightens the prospects that they will be rewarded.

Although these studies show that altruism is more commonly directed at relatives or those who are likely to reciprocate, altruism does not disappear when these conditions are not met. Human beings selectively make sacrifices to help ingroup rather than outgroup members, even when ingroup members are not able to reciprocate (Bernhard, Fischbacher & Fehr, 2006). De Waal (2008) argues that the adaptive value of altruism has shaped our emotional and cognitive makeup, so that we have evolved the capacity for empathy. Success in reproduction and parenthood requires us, and other mammalian species, to have the capacity to form emotional ties and develop empathic concern for children very quickly (MacLean, 1985). This ability to empathize and quickly care for others may then have generalized to other cases. Indeed, de Waal (2008) argues that in most situations confronting our ancestors, who lived in small, interrelated groups, the people they had opportunities to help were somewhat related to them and were likely to reciprocate. The tendency to feel empathic concern for others has taken on a motivational life of its own. As de Waal (2008) puts it:

> Once evolved, behavior often assumes motivational autonomy, that is, its motivation becomes disconnected from its ultimate goals. A good example is sexual behavior, which arose to serve reproduction. Since animals are, as far as we know, unaware of the link between sex and reproduction, they must be engaging in sex (as do humans much of the time) without progeny in mind. (p. 281)

A similar argument has often been run with the emotion of disgust (Haidt, 2003; Oaten, Stevenson & Case, 2009; Phillips et al., 1997). Disgust deterred our ancestors from interacting with slimy, rotten things that could make them sick, and the same emotional machinery has now generalized to shape the way we think about outgroups (Fincher & Thornhill, 2012; Inbar, Pizarro, Knobe & Bloom, 2009; Petersen, 2017; see Chapter 12), other people's moral violations (Giner-Sorolla & Chapman, 2017; Schnall, Haidt, Clore & Jordan, 2008; see Chapter 4) and political ideology (Brenner & Inbar, 2015; Inbar, Pizarro & Bloom, 2008).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Knowing what you know about altruism, imagine you are trying to get members of your university to donate blood. What techniques would work best, and why? Using a search engine or database such as PsycINFO, find research on techniques to encourage blood donation. How can you relate these studies to what you have learned so far in this chapter?

Who gets help?

Research suggests that aspects of the person significantly influence whether or not they receive help. Specifically, factors like age, gender, attractiveness and personality determine the degree of help received:

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1 Age: as we get older, we become more reluctant to seek help. For example, research shows that children are very willing to seek and accept help, arguably because they need it more, but also because they do not regard it as a sign of weakness. Unfortunately, this is not true of older children and adults, who may be less likely to get help when they need it, because they do not ask (Shell & Eisenberg, 1992). This has obvious implications for health and wellbeing, especially in older age groups.

2 Gender: research suggests that women are more likely to receive help than men (Bruder-Mattson & Hovanitz, 1990). For example, strangers are more likely to respond to simple questions (e.g., asking for the time) if they are made by women rather than men (Pearce, 1980). One of the suspected reasons for this tendency is that it is more difficult for men to accept help than it is for women (Bruder-Mattson & Hovanitz, 1990). For men, it is argued that accepting help is a sign of weakness and has more personal costs than it does

for women. It is also reasonable to consider this gender effect as a form of sexism. In particular, women may receive more help because they are perceived as weak and in need of help (Kende & Schnabel, 2017). See Chapter 11 for more about how subtle sexist attitudes can drive behaviours such as this and how these behaviours reinforce gender hierarchies that keep women in subordinate positions.

3 Attractiveness: attractive people receive more help than unattractive people (Wilson & Dovidio, 1985). For example, people are more likely to receive directions (and people take longer to give directions) if the recipient is attractive (Harrell, 1978). Interestingly, this happens in cases where there may or may not be a benefit for the help-giver. One might assume that attractive people receive more help because people perceive the possibility of future interactions with them, but this does not appear to be the case (Benson, Karabenick & Lerner, 1976).

4 Personality: personality influences the likelihood of receiving help. For example, people who are socially anxious receive less support from their peers (Caldwell & Reinhart, 1988). However, some studies suggest that people who are high in self-esteem receive less help, mainly because they do not ask for it, or need it (Nadler, Altman & Fisher, 1979). On the other hand, people with high self-esteem benefit more from social support networks (Caldwell & Reinhart, 1988).

SOCIAL DILEMMAS

The study of altruism has an important implication that extends beyond situations in everyday life where we can choose whether or not to help a victim. In particular, a kind of altruism is crucial to the very success of our society. In many situations, what is best for the individual is not best for the group as a whole. Very often, if the group is going to achieve its goals, it requires individuals to pool together and sacrifice their own interests for the benefit of all. These situations are known as **social dilemmas** (Dawes, 1980). When people put aside their own interests in order to help the group as a whole, their behaviour is termed **cooperation**, and when they act in their own interests at the expense of the group, their behaviour is termed **defection**.

Social dilemmas
Situations in which the interests of the individual are at odds with the interests of the group.

Cooperation
Decisions that sacrifice the person's interests for the sake of the group.

Defection
Decisions that pursue the person's interests at the expense of the group.

Real-life examples of social dilemmas abound. In war, soldiers' interests, and indeed their very lives, may be better protected if they desert the field of battle, but the interests of their group – their platoon, or their entire nation – normally require that they fight. Recycling and environmental behaviours can be expensive for the individual but benefit wider society. Team sports often require that a player sacrifice their own performance to ensure the success of their team, rather than going for individual glory. In cricket, for example, when a team needs to score many runs quickly to win, individual batters are expected to risk getting out, potentially damaging their own career statistics, in pursuit of quick runs. Another less entertaining but probably more important example is taxation. Individuals are materially better off if they can avoid paying tax. However, without tax revenue, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for governments to finance hospitals, schools, roads or the streetlights to illuminate them.

Types of social dilemma

Experimental social psychologists (and researchers in related fields such as behavioural economics and evolutionary biology) attempt to distil the essence of these real-life dilemmas into experimental games. The simplest and most studied is the **prisoner's dilemma**. This is played by two people, who are asked to imagine that they are suspects

Prisoner's dilemma
Simulated social dilemma used in social psychological research. 'Prisoners' have to choose between confessing or not, risking a heavy or light sentence for them and a partner.

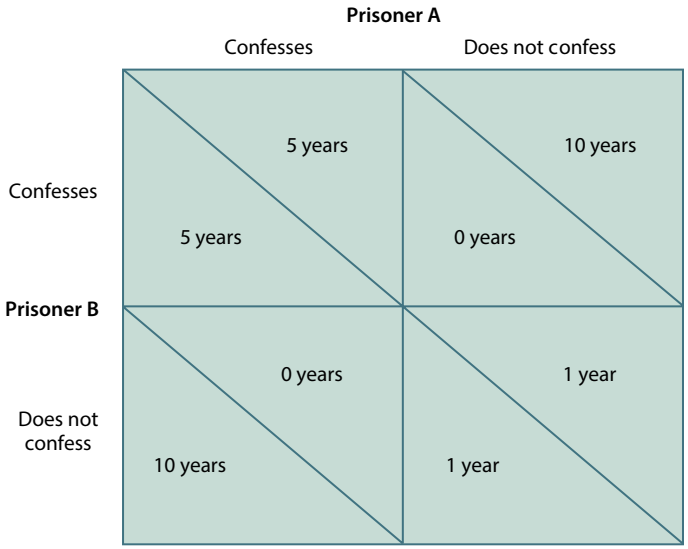

FIGURE 14.8 The prisoner's dilemma game Each of the four rectangles represents the prison sentence that prisoner A will receive (above the diagonal line) and the sentence that prisoner B will receive if one, both or neither confesses.

caught by the police and charged with a joint crime. The police offer each of them a bargain. Each is told that if they confess to the joint crime, effectively betraying their partner as well as themselves, they will receive a reduced sentence. If one prisoner confesses and their partner does not, the confessor's sentence will be greatly reduced, and their partner's will be increased. If they both confess, they will receive a somewhat shorter sentence of intermediate length. If neither confesses, they will both receive quite short sentences (see Figure 14.8).

This is a social dilemma because the overall interests of this 'group' of two people, defined as the total amount of time served in prison, are better served if each prisoner does not confess. On the other hand, each individual prisoner is always better off if they confess. Therefore, refusing to confess is an example of 'cooperation', serving the group's interest, whereas confession is 'defection', in which the individual does what is best for them despite the overall interests of the group.

EXPLORING FURTHER

To help illustrate why not confessing is the cooperative choice in the prisoner's dilemma, calculate the total amount of prison time served by both prisoners in all combinations. The mean sentence served by both is an index of their joint interests. The lower this is, the better off they are as a 'group' of two people. Your calculations should show that, on average, both are better off if they do not confess, but one prisoner is always personally better off confessing. This is why the prisoner's dilemma is truly a social dilemma, pitting individual interests against those of the whole group.

Thus far, we have looked at the prisoner's dilemma from the perspective of the prisoner who is immediately faced with a decision – do I betray my partner to save my own skin? But the flipside of this perspective is that as well as being a *moral agent* who has to make their own decision, each prisoner is a *moral patient* whose fate depends on the other's decision. As you can see in Figure 14.8, regardless of their own decision, a prisoner is better off if their partner decides to cooperate. Many social situations are rather like that – you can enjoy a park, use a road or a hospital that others have paid for, regardless of whether you have personally contributed to it through taxes, for example. Thus, the prisoner's dilemma is sometimes described as a two-person **public goods dilemma** (e.g., Andreoni, 1988). A public good is one that people cannot feasibly be prevented from using, even if they have not paid their share – such as a park or a public hospital. The group as a whole is better off if everybody cooperates by contributing to such goods, but each individual within the group is better off, at least in material terms, if they avoid paying their share. The parks, roads and hospitals will still be there, and are unlikely to be noticeably worse off because one individual does not cooperate. Defection in a public goods dilemma is termed *free riding* – benefiting from others' contribution while choosing not to follow their example (e.g., Yamagishi & Sato, 1986).

Public goods dilemma
A dilemma in which individuals are better off if they do not contribute but the group as a whole is worse off.

Chris LeBoutillier/Pixabay

FIGURE 14.9 Global warming as a commons dilemma The problem of global warming or climate change has many of the characteristics of a commons dilemma. The earth's atmosphere is a resource shared by all, and collectively human beings have a strong interest to ensure that the proportion of gases does not get out of balance. But individual people, companies and countries' economic interests are served by discharging carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere (van Vugt, 2009; see also van Lange, Joireman & Milinski, 2018).

The other type of social dilemma that has received a lot of attention is the **commons dilemma**. Whereas public goods dilemmas involve a resource that is to some extent built up by the group, commons dilemmas feature a resource that is taken away by the group. The original example of this dilemma was described as the *tragedy of the commons* (Hardin, 1968). Hardin uses the example of a common grazing land shared by a group of herders who each have open access to this common resource. Each herder is individually better off if they graze as many animals as they can on this land, but the other herders will suffer as a result of the damage caused to the common by the excess of animals. If too many herders graze more than their share, eventually the common is exhausted and may even be permanently destroyed by overuse. It is easy to think of real-life commons dilemmas, such as global warming (see Figure 14.9) and the depletion of global fish stocks. Each fishing boat, and each country, benefits by overfishing. Doing so, however, both reduces the resources available for others and threatens to destroy the resource altogether, because intense overfishing makes it impossible for the fish population to replenish itself through breeding.

Commons dilemma
A dilemma in which individual interests are served by using a resource but collective interests suffer because the resource is depleted.

TIME TO REFLECT

Can you think of other examples of commons dilemmas or specific situations of dilemmas? What happened in these cases?

ENCOURAGING COOPERATION

Learning to build and share resources for the common good is one of the most fundamental challenges facing human beings, and is likely to be ever more pressing now that there are more and more of 'us', the human population having reached almost 7.7 billion in 2019 and projected to reach 8.5 billion by 2030. Thus, it is apt that social psychologists have spent a good

deal of effort identifying conditions that facilitate cooperation for the common good. Broadly speaking, four types of factors seem to be helpful:

- if people in a social dilemma value the common interest as well as their own
- if they have a strong sense of identification with the wider group
- if they are able to communicate with each other and establish principles and ground rules before they have to make decisions
- if their own strategic decisions effectively reward cooperators and punish defectors as the social dilemma unfolds.

Encouraging prosocial versus pro-self orientation

Situational factors determine behaviour in social dilemmas, but personality factors also play a role. Some people will tend to cooperate across social dilemmas, whereas others will defect in the same situations. One personality variable that captures this difference between people is known as **social value orientation** (van Lange & Liebrand, 1991). Essentially, some people are 'pro-self', and indicate on questionnaires that, given the choice, they will prioritize getting resources for themselves without concern for the resources that others gain (Liebrand & McClintock, 1988). Indeed, some pro-self individuals may actively seek to ensure that others get less than themselves (van Lange, Otten, De Bruin & Joireman, 1997). In contrast, others are 'prosocial', indicating concern with maximizing the resources available to others as well as themselves (van Lange, 1999). It may not surprise you to learn that pro-self individuals are much less likely to cooperate in social dilemmas than prosocial people (for reviews, see Bogaert, Boone & Declerck, 2008; van Lange, De Cremer, van Dijk & van Vugt, 2007). One implication of these findings is that people who are in charge of group situations such as work teams, which have the characteristics of a group dilemma – people sometimes have to sacrifice their own interests for the sake of the group – might do well to select individuals who are prosocial, rather than pro-self. Another implication is that the group's interests would be served if it were somehow possible to 'make' people more prosocial, whether temporarily or permanently, but no research has examined whether this is possible. Another important finding is that expectations about others' behaviour in social dilemmas appears to be influenced by social value orientation. In a meta-analysis, Pletzer, Balliet, Joireman, Kuhlman, Voelpel and van Lange (2018) found that relative to pro-self people, prosocial people expect more cooperation from others. The meta-analysis also revealed that these expectations partially mediate the relationship between social value orientation and cooperative behaviour in social dilemmas. That is, expectations partly explain why prosocial people are more cooperative compared to pro-self people in social dilemma situations. Even pro-self people appear more likely to cooperate when they expect their partner to do so.

Social value orientation The extent to which an individual is 'pro-self or 'prosocial', which determines the extent to which people will be cooperative.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Are you pro-self or prosocial? Search online to find a copy of a measure of social value orientation. You can complete it, score yourself and see how you fall relative to the means reported in the articles.

Encouraging strong social identification

In this chapter, we have already seen how bystanders' sense of shared social identification with a victim can encourage helping behaviour. A strong sense of social identification with the group also encourages people to cooperate in public goods dilemmas. This is especially true of people who are pro-self, suggesting that social identification increases cooperation by encouraging people to see helping the group as tantamount to helping themselves. De Cremer and van Vugt

(1999) obtained support for this hypothesis with a study of behaviour in public goods dilemmas among students at Southampton University in the UK. De Cremer and van Vugt pretested the social value orientation of their participants according to their choices in hypothetical social dilemmas. On the basis of the pretest, 61 per cent of the participants were classified as prosocial, and 24 per cent as pro-self. Before participants played the public goods dilemma game, the researchers manipulated the level of group identification by describing the experiment either as a comparison of the behaviour of different individuals in such games (low identification) or of the behaviour of students at different universities (high identification, the group in question being Southampton University students). Pro-self participants contributed more money when in the high, rather than the low, identification condition. In fact, in the high group identification condition, they donated as much money as prosocial participants. In the low group identification condition, pro-self participants gave significantly less money than prosocial participants, as we might normally expect. For their part, prosocial participants were unaffected by the group identification manipulation (see Figure 14.10).

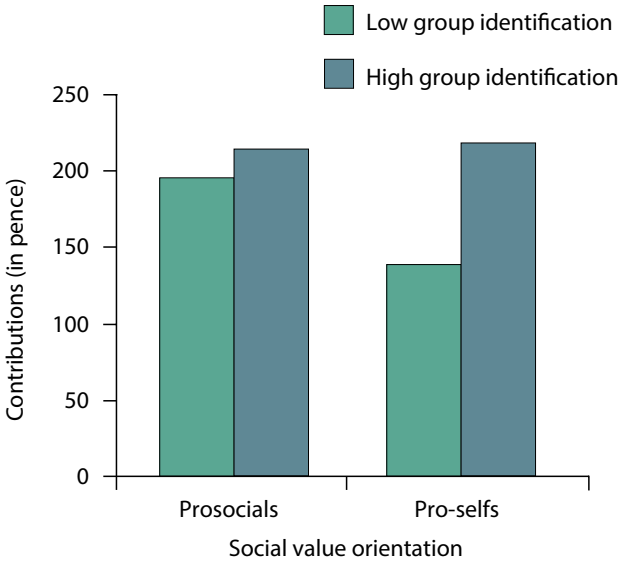

FIGURE 14.10 Cooperation as a function of social identity and social value orientation Pro-self participants contributed more money in the high group identification condition than in the low identification condition. Prosocial participants were unaffected by the manipulation.These results suggest that cooperation can be increased by encouraging people to see helping the group as really helping the self.

Source: De Cremer and van Vugt (1999). Copyright © 1999 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Communication

Part of the problem facing participants in social dilemmas is their uncertainty about how others will behave. Presumably, most people would like to live in a world where people do not behave with absolute selfishness but also take into account the common good. However, a significant problem is that we cannot necessarily trust others to do that, and perhaps because of that mistrust, we are more inclined to pursue our own interests. No one likes to lose out, and no one likes to find their prosocial behaviour exploited by others (Yamagishi, Cook & Watabe, 1998). This mistrust can be resolved by communication.

In an early demonstration of this effect, Dawes, McTavish and Shaklee (1977) put participants into groups of eight and either gave them a chance to communicate about how they should behave in an upcoming commons dilemma, to communicate about irrelevant topics or deprived them of the opportunity to communicate before playing the game. Cooperation was significantly higher in the 'relevant communication' condition than in the other two conditions. Communicating about irrelevant topics did not increase cooperative behaviour. It seems that cooperative behaviour can be increased if people have a chance to discuss the ground rules and establish a norm of cooperative behaviour. Associated with this change is an increased trust that others will cooperate. The finding that communicating about irrelevant topics does not increase cooperative behaviour suggests that the effect of communication does not boil down simply to participants getting to know each other.

Subsequent research has suggested that the beneficial effect of communication only works under some conditions. Specifically, communication most effectively increases cooperation when:

- Group members discuss appropriate behaviour and advocate cooperation in a constructive way, rather than merely taking the opportunity to threaten those who would defect (Stech & McClintock, 1981).

- The social dilemma is relatively easy to understand or 'demonstrable', so that group members can explain to each other how their common interest is served by cooperation (Hopthrow & Hulbert, 2005; Laughlin, 1980).
- Individuals make clear and emphatic personal promises to cooperate, and establish a strong norm of cooperation (Kerr and Kaufman-Gilliland, 1994).

Under the right conditions, communication can be powerful in bringing cooperation about, as demonstrated by a study with English undergraduate students. Hopthrow and Abrams (2010) conducted a pretest to determine whether each of the participants in this study favoured cooperation or defection as a strategy in a social dilemma. They then put participants together in groups of six, several of which were *unanimously opposed to cooperation* at the start of the experiment. Surprisingly, even these groups showed high levels of cooperation in a subsequent dilemma if they were first given a chance to communicate with each other. This is a remarkable exception to the group polarization effect we have seen in earlier chapters (notably Chapter 10), where groups tend to act in line with a stronger version of their members' initial attitudes. Communication had this striking effect of overturning members' initial attitudes only if the social dilemma was demonstrable, making the benefits of cooperation easy to explain to group members.

Strategies during the game: punishing others' defection and rewarding their cooperation

Participants in a social dilemma often have the chance to modify each others' behaviour during the game even if they have not first had a chance to lay down the norms and ground rules through communication. They can do this by making strategic decisions that tend to reward cooperators and punish defectors. A simple example is the so-called *tit-for-tat strategy*. In a two-person social dilemma such as the prisoner's dilemma, a player can opt to cooperate if the other player has just cooperated, and to defect if they have just defected. This simple strategy is an example of the principle of reciprocity – responding in kind to others' cooperation and defection. The strategy works because it encourages other players to cooperate. Indeed, the tit-for-tat strategy has consistently been shown to be the best, or 'optimal', strategy in the prisoner's dilemma, especially when the dilemma is set up so that players take alternating turns (e.g., Wedekind & Milinski, 1996). The success of tit for tat has led some theorists to suggest that it may have evolved in humans and other animals (e.g., Axelrod & Hamilton, 1981) – one study even showed that fish use this strategy (Sogawa & Kodha, 2018).

Altruistic punishment This involves incurring a personal cost in order to harm a person who has defected.

Indirect reciprocity This involves incurring a personal cost in order to reward a person who has cooperated with other group members.

Direct reciprocity The case where a person incurs personal cost to reward a person who has cooperated with them personally. Both altruistic punishment and indirect reciprocity encourage people to cooperate rather than defect.

Doing unto others as they do unto others: indirect reciprocity and altruistic punishment

As we have seen, biologists, economists and psychologists have long been puzzled by the extent to which people are altruistic (e.g., cooperate) when they would be better off, at least in purely material terms, if they defected. Scientists' understanding of this puzzle has been greatly advanced by research into altruistic punishment and indirect reciprocity. In social dilemmas, people frequently choose to punish defections by other members of the group, even at personal expense. For example, a person may sacrifice €1 of their own payoff to reduce a defector's payoff by €2. This is known as **altruistic punishment**, because of its self-sacrificing quality (e.g., Fehr & Gachter, 2002). Also, people incur personal costs to reward cooperative behaviour and punish defection. They do this, for example, by donating money to people who have previously donated to others, even when they know the person they are donating to will have no chance to give them money in turn. This behaviour is known as **indirect reciprocity** (e.g., Wedekind & Milinski, 2000). It can be distinguished from **direct reciprocity** – the form of reciprocal altruism we learned about earlier in this chapter. In direct reciprocity, an altruist is rewarded by the beneficiary of their altruism – not by a third party.

TIME TO REFLECT

Before you read on, what do you think might motivate people to sacrifice their own interests to punish defectors?

In a classic series of experiments, Fehr and Gachter (2002) showed that altruistic punishment may be commonplace and has the effect of increasing cooperative behaviour. Fehr and Gachter's (2002) public goods dilemmas ran in blocks of six rounds. In some of these blocks, participants were able to punish other players who had defected. Each unit of their own money they spent to do this cost the punished member three units of their money. Punishment was performed anonymously – other group members could not tell who was doing the punishment. In these blocks, punishment was frequent, with over 84 per cent of participants choosing to punish at least once, and it was harsh. For example, imagine you are playing in round five or six, by which time punishment systems are entrenched, and you pay approximately 15 fewer monetary units to the group than the other participants. In this case, your 'crime' definitely does not pay – you can expect to pay just about double your original underpayment – nearly 30 monetary units – in punishments imposed by the rest of the group. In blocks of rounds where this kind of punishment was possible, cooperation levels across the group gradually increased (see Figure 14.11). In stark contrast, blocks in which participants were deprived of the opportunity to punish saw cooperation levels gradually decrease from round to round. In

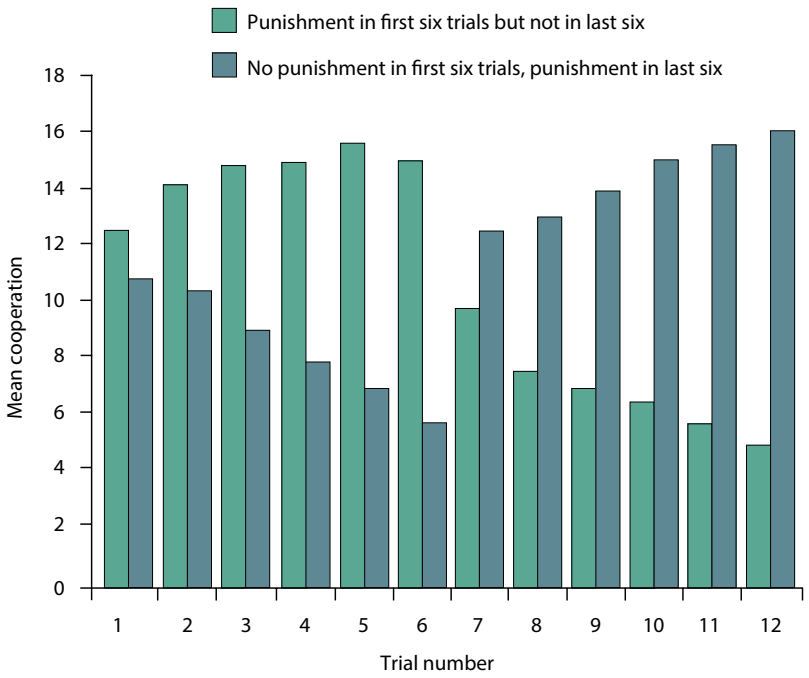

FIGURE 14.11 The power of altruistic punishment to increase cooperation When participants initially have the ability to punish each other, cooperation levels are high and increase over time. When this ability is taken away (on the seventh trial), cooperation levels drop dramatically and keep dropping. Conversely, when participants are initially unable to punish, cooperation starts at a reasonably good level but declines over trials. When the ability to punish is introduced, cooperation levels rise and keep increasing. These results vividly demonstrate the power of altruistic punishment to increase cooperation.

Source: Data from Fehr and Gachter (2002)

the final round of a block of trials, the average contribution to the group in each round was around three times greater if punishment was allowed than if it was not.

Here, then, is a case of an 'altruistic' behaviour that is a deliberate infliction of harm on another person. Indeed, it qualifies as an act of *aggression,* according to the definition we adopted in Chapter 13. If it deserves to be called altruistic, it is because it is self-sacrificing, and because it appears to be an attempt to preserve the interests of the group by discouraging defection. Thus, it would seem that altruistic punishment is an attempt at being 'cruel to be kind'. However, while it is obviously cruel in a sense to the punished individual, it is not yet entirely clear whether it is really kind to the group in the way that punishers presumably intend.

One problem was raised by Dreber, Rand, Fudenberg and Nowak (2008), who ran prisoner's dilemma games under two different conditions. In one condition, participants could either cooperate (paying one unit for the other player to get two or three units) or defect (gaining one unit at a cost to the other person of one unit), with no opportunity to punish. In the other condition, participants had a third option of punishing (spending one unit for the other player to lose four units). Dreber et al. (2008) found that cooperation was increased in the punishment condition, as it was in Fehr and Gachter's (2002) studies. Crucially though, this did not seem to do anyone much good. The problem is that punishment is costly, reducing the payoffs received by those who punish and who are punished alike. This cost counteracts the effect of increased cooperation on the average payoffs received by participants in the dilemma. In the case of the experiments by Dreber et al. (2008) and some others they reviewed, the net effect was to reduce the average payoff received by participants, compared to the no-punishment condition. Far from benefiting the group, altruistic punishment harmed it in material terms.

As Dreber et al. (2008) acknowledged, there could well be circumstances in which altruistic punishment does increase the average payoff received by all group members, for example in games where the price of cooperation, defection and punishments is changed, or where games continue for longer. However, one key finding is bad news for the idea that evolutionary forces may have equipped human beings with a disposition towards altruistic punishment. Specifically, among Dreber et al.'s (2008) participants, those who punished received substantially smaller payoffs than those who refrained from punishment. The best strategy was 'tit for tat' – to respond with cooperation after the other player cooperates, and with defection when they defect. Thus, altruistic punishment may not benefit the group, and costs the punishers dearly. In light of these results, it is difficult to see how altruistic punishment may have been favoured by natural selection.

Still, we think there is room to believe that it might have been. Notably, the experimental games conducted thus far, however ingenious, elegant and tightly controlled, differ from many real-life contexts in important respects. One is that the currency of punishment in these experiments is exactly the same as the currency of cooperation and defection – money. In reality, the range of human motivation and emotion equips us with many more ways to punish effectively, including violence, ostracism, malicious gossip and disdain. These forms of punishment do not necessarily cost the punisher, or even the punished individual, in the same way. Thus, a group whose primary goal is to make money is likely to do better if it has available to it a punishment scheme that is effective but does not require the expenditure of money. Indeed, one study suggests that the use of a non-monetary punishment can increase monetary cooperation. Specifically, participants in a social dilemma contribute more to the group if they believe they will be ostracized if they do not (Ouwerkerk, Kerr, Gallucci & van Lange, 2005). By definition, because punishing by means of ostracism costs no money, and because average payoffs increase as cooperation increases, the group is

better off in monetary terms. Further, there are perhaps less tangible benefits of altruistic punishment, such as improved satisfaction with the group and increased adherence to its norms and its leadership. These might stand groups in good stead in less narrow, more realistic circumstances than those found in the experimental social dilemmas conducted thus far. Imagine, for example, that a group has to confront a collective crisis such as a flood or an invasion of its territory – those with strongly enforced norms of cooperation are more likely to win through. These less tangible benefits are of great interest to social psychologists and probably to participants themselves, but typically are not measured as outcomes in the experiments.

A specific feature of the experiments by Dreber et al. (2008) also suggests that altruistic punishment may be more obviously beneficial in other social situations. Specifically, their social dilemma was the dyadic (that is, two-player) prisoner's dilemma. If you punish the other player, they are hardly going to be impressed with you, which may undermine their cooperation with you. However, if you punish a defector in a larger group, the third, fourth, fifth and any other players may be impressed with your firm action. In this case, they may be inclined to reward you, much as they reward those who make generous donations to others (Wedekind & Milinski, 2000). Indeed, when given the opportunity, they may choose to punish you if you fail to punish a defector. If you are in a social dilemma, your reputation can be important to you. Concern about your reputation, and therefore how others will treat you, is likely to motivate you to cooperate and punish those who do not. Computer simulations suggest that altruistic punishment will have a marginal effect on cooperation in dyadic dilemmas, but a large effect in dilemmas involving 16 people (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2003).

TIME TO REFLECT

A study by Grimalda, Pondofer and Tracer (2016) demonstrated that social image concerns were more important than punishment in promoting cooperative behaviour. What other factors might affect cooperation?

THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF JUSTICE

We have seen that altruism and cooperation are important principles of social organization in human life. Another principle is also important – justice. **Justice** is a broad term with many meanings and nuances, but at heart, it exists when people treat each other as they are entitled or deserve to be treated. Entitlement refers to the positive treatments (e.g., respect, autonomy, inheritances) people should receive according to agreed upon laws, customs and moral principles. Deservingness refers to the treatments, positive or negative, that a person is perceived to have earned because of their good or bad behaviour (Feather, 2003, 2008).

Justice This is said to exist when people treat each other as they are entitled or deserve to be treated.

Distributive justice Concern with the justness of the outcomes that people receive.

Procedural justice Concern with the fairness of the processes used to distribute justice.

Distributive justice is concerned with the apportionment of privileges, duties and goods in consonance with the merits of the individual and in the best interest of society. **Procedural justice** is concerned with the fairness of the procedures that resolve disputes and allocate resources. Normally, fair procedures produce fair outcomes, but not always. It is possible, for example, for a referee to incorrectly rule a penalty. This violates a principle

of distributive justice. However, if the referee's mistake is an honest one, and they explain the basis for the decision clearly, then there has been no violation of procedural justice (see Figure 14.12).

E+/isitsharp

FIGURE 14.12 Procedurally versus distributively fair refereeing This referee's decision may be mistaken, and so violates principles of distributive justice. But if it is made honestly, and according to correct procedures, then it is not a violation of procedural justice.

Justice permeates all aspects of our lives. For example, we think about justice and injustice in the context of the criminal justice system, in the allocation of economic resources and costs such as taxes and benefits, in discrimination and equality between groups, in education (have you always felt your marks and comments were fair?), and in our personal lives. Why is it that justice is such an ever present concern to human beings? According to most theories that have addressed this question, justice has two important functions. First, if people are, or think they have been, treated justly in life, their own functioning is improved; for example, they are happier, less prone to negative affect and anxiety, more confident that if they work hard and respect social norms they will receive good outcomes and so on (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Lerner, 1980). Second, justice has a benefit to the collective if people work hard, respect social rules, are not motivated to abuse others and so on (Jost & Kay, 2010; Tyler, 2007).

Culture and justice

Culture plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of the treatment that people are entitled or deserve to receive. In some cultures, for example, theft is seen as a crime deserving amputation of hands or even execution, whereas in others, thieves are required to meet and discuss their offence with their victims. Nonetheless, some basic, universally regarded principles of justice seem to underpin these widely varying cultural practices. Deutsch (1975) articulated three key principles of justice – the equity, equality and need principles (see also Rai & Fiske, 2011):

» According to the equity principle, the outcomes that people receive should be proportional to their merit and contribution. So, the harder you work or the more you produce, the more you should be rewarded.

- According to the equality principle, resources should be distributed equally in the community.
- According to the need principle, the focus should be on what people need to survive and thrive.

Thus, regardless of how hard people work or their moral qualities, the need principle would suggest they should receive support from others. Although people in all cultures seem to invoke these principles and regard them as important, their relative importance varies (Bond, Leung & Schwartz, 1992). In collectivist cultures, where harmony within a community is given the highest priority, equality assumes more importance (Leung & Bond, 1984). On the other hand, where the focus is on the job of maximizing wealth and productivity, the equity principle tends to be most important. And when the group confronts grave shortages of resources or threats to its survival, need may become a more important principle (Deutsch, 1975).

EXPLORING FURTHER

Searching online, can you find examples of people complaining that money or some other resource is not being distributed fairly? In the cases you find, do the perceived violations of justice seem to be violations of equity, principle or need?

The importance of justice for human beings

In this section, we pay attention to two important questions at the heart of research on justice. The first is, what effect does the deep psychological commitment to justice have on people's behaviour? That is, how do they attempt to preserve justice when it appears to be threatened? The second related but more general question is, what are some of the factors that lead people to act justly or unjustly, and how can social psychologists play their part in promoting justice?

Social exchange and equity theories

Of all the theoretical approaches to the human desire for justice, social exchange theory (Homans, 1961; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) is most consistent with the view of classical economics and evolutionary biology that people pursue their own interests first and foremost. As you will remember from Chapter 7, social exchange theory assumes that people try to maximize personal benefits and minimize personal costs in their social relationships. Emotions and concerns with justice are also important, as was made clear by Adams' (1965) equity theory, which built on core principles of social exchange theory (also covered in Chapter 7). This theory assumes that people compare and evaluate the net benefits they are receiving with those received by their relationship partners. It is distressing to people when they feel they are underbenefiting or overbenefiting, but reactions to overbenefiting may be more complicated than reactions to underbenefiting. If you are getting too much out of a relationship, you may feel guilty, but at some level it is also intrinsically satisfying to be doing well. According to some theorists, self-interest has a fast, largely unconscious, gut-level effect on our satisfaction levels, whereas it takes more cognitive effort to process and evaluate information about fairness and unfairness (Moore & Lowenstein, 2004). Consistent with this reasoning, people are less likely to express dissatisfaction with being overpaid when they are under cognitive load, that is,

distracted by a second task such as trying to remember the following string of symbols: @* %#?$±§ (van den Bos, Peters, Bobocel & Ybema, 2006). Presumably, cognitive load deprives overpaid people of the cognitive resources they need to fully realize, and feel bad about, the injustice of their privileged position.

TIME TO REFLECT

As we shall see below, a study by Callan, Sutton and Dovale (2010) showed that people tend to construe outcomes as just when under cognitive load. In keeping with Lerner's (1980) just world theory, they suggest that people preconsciously interpret events as if the world were a just place. Do you think this offers a viable alternative interpretation of the findings by van den Bos et al. (2006)? How?

Along the same lines, Peters, van den Bos and Karremans (2008) measured the time it took for people to make judgements about the fairness or unfairness of their pay. When they were being underpaid, they were relatively quick to indicate that their pay was unfair, but when they were being overpaid, it took them longer. Apparently, the inherent ambivalence of being overpaid – it is nice to have lots of money but not nice that it is not necessarily fair – creates mixed emotions that slow people's reactions down. There is an emotional reason to say 'Yes, it is fair' and another to say 'It is not fair', and the conflict causes delay.

Social exchange and equity theories have been widely applied in the science of management and organizational behaviour (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001), as well as the science of intimate personal relationships, where they have been successful in predicting which marriages and long-term partnerships last and which fail (e.g., Frisco & Williams, 2003). However, there are some problems facing these theories. Most importantly, they explain why we are concerned when we appear to be being unfairly treated compared to people who are in some kind of relationship with us, but do not readily explain why we care more generally about the justice received by people with little or no connection to us (Lerner, 1980; van den Bos & Lind, 2001). They also do not explain why we react to injustices that appear to occur outside the context of ongoing social relationships – such as when people are struck down undeservedly with disease, injury or famine. These concerns motivated the formulation of the most influential of all theories of justice, the just world theory.

Just world theory

Just world theory
Theory that people have a deep-seated need to perceive the world as a just place where people get what they deserve and deserve what they get.

According to Lerner's (1980) **just world theory**, people have a deep-seated need to perceive the world as a just place. For Lerner (1980), this need arises early in life, at the stage where parents are socializing their children to follow rules and work towards their goals. Influenced by Freud's theorizing about human development, Lerner speculated that at a certain stage in childhood, children switch from living according to the *pleasure principle,* in which they pursue immediate gratification regardless of the longer term consequences, to the *reality principle,* in which they learn to delay and moderate gratification in order to avoid punishments and earn rewards in the longer term. To illustrate, a very young child will probably follow the pleasure principle by simply taking a toy or a sweet, regardless of whether it belongs to someone else or if they have been told not to do it. In contrast, an older child is more likely to refrain from doing so, because they realize that such behaviour is likely to be punished. Lerner suggests that around this time, children form an implicit 'personal contract' with the world, in which they commit to following moral rules, but expect to receive good (that is, deserved) outcomes in exchange for doing so.

Effectively, the essence of just world theory is that in childhood, most people make a commitment to live according to the principles of justice. Faith in the personal contract – that life will treat them fairly – becomes an organizing principle in their lives. It gives them the confidence to make

and pursue goals, expecting their lives to be orderly, meaningful and controllable (see Hafer & Rubel, 2015, and Hafer & Sutton, 2016 for reviews). In turn, this expectation promotes mental health, meaning that the belief in a just world (BJW) can be seen as a 'positive illusion' (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Indeed, research links it to many measures of psychological health, including positive affect (Dalbert, 1999), optimism (Littrell & Beck, 1999), effective coping with stress (Tomaka & Blascovich, 1994), better sleep (Jensen, Dehlin, Hagberg, Samuelsson & Svensson, 1998), low levels of depression (Ritter, Benson & Synder, 1990) and less loneliness (Jones, Freemon & Goswick, 2006).

However, according to this theory, BJW is a double-edged sword because its psychological benefits motivate individuals to defend it against contradictory evidence, thereby minimizing the injustices they see happening to others. Where possible, observers may do this by actively helping victims (e.g., Zuckerman, 1975), but where not, individuals may adopt cognitive strategies such as blame and derogation to minimize the apparent injustice being suffered (Lerner & Miller, 1978).

This tendency was illustrated in a classic experiment by Lerner and Simmons (1966). Women volunteers watched a female confederate who seemed to be a participant in a learning experiment and who was receiving painful electric shocks when she got the answers wrong (the task was difficult, so that observers would not be tempted to think the confederate was stupid). Lerner and Simmons wanted to test the idea that observers would compensate the suffering victim where they could, but would devalue and reject her if they could not defend justice in this behavioural way. To up the ante, Lerner and Simmons informed their participants that they would have to watch a second session of the learning experiment, that is, witness more of the victim's suffering. Results supported their predictions. When observers could help the victim, they did so (by assigning her to a condition where she received money rather than shocks), and did not devalue or reject her. However, when observers were told there was nothing they could do to help the victim, their attitudes towards her were more harsh.

Lerner and Simmons (1966) also included a condition in which the victim seemed to be especially undeserving of the suffering she was going through. Specifically, they led participants to believe that the victim was taking the shocks so as to prevent them from going through a similar experience. This creates a situation in which bad things seem to be happening to a good person, which is especially threatening to the BJW. Under these conditions, attitudes to the victim were, ironically, the harshest of all. Other early experiments supported the core idea that people will help when they can, but restore the 'just world' with distorted thinking about victims when they could not (for reviews, see Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Lerner & Miller, 1978).

This line of thought has important implications for charities; ironically, if they ask the public for help to solve huge problems, such as mass famine or eradicating widespread and devastating diseases, the public may think there is little they can do to help, which, far from encouraging helping behaviour, is likely to lead to devaluation of the victims (see Figure 14.13). On the other hand, if they ask the public to help just one victim, they are much more likely to do so. It is probably for this reason that charitable appeals often ask us to 'adopt a polar bear' rather than do

PHOTOALTO

FIGURE 14.13 The bigger the problem seems, the less we help The problem of homelessness is so big. What can I do? Just world research suggests that in such situations, the victims can become devalued. Helping behaviour actually decreases.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Look at advertisements for charity appeals for some major environmental, animal welfare, medical and children's charities. Research suggests that these appeals may be more successful when, instead of presenting a huge, widespread problem, they invite the public to help just one victim of the problem. To what extent do they 'personalize' or 'particularize' the problems they are trying to solve in this way?

something small to save them all. Indeed, Miller (1977) found that Canadian participants who believed strongly in a just world were more likely to help the victims of a rare rather than a common disease, or a temporary financial setback rather than ongoing poverty. Those who did not believe so strongly in a just world were not affected by whether the problems they were asked to help solve were large or small. It seems that making a small contribution to alleviate a big problem is unattractive to many people because it provides a painful reminder that there is a lot of injustice in the world; resolving a small, local injustice feels more like making the world a just place.

In line with these experimental findings, research shows that individuals who have a strong BJW also tend to be prejudiced towards a range of disadvantaged groups, including refugees (Montada, 1998), people with AIDS (Connors & Heaven, 1990), the unemployed (Reichle, Schneider & Montada, 1998), the elderly (Lipkus & Siegler, 1993), the mentally ill (Johansson & Kunst, 2017) and the poor (Furnham & Gunter, 1984). Thus, there seems to be something like a social dilemma at play – believing in a just world is good for the individual, but may, in some respects, be bad for the group, insofar as it can breed prejudice towards the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in society.

However, research suggests that in principle, this dilemma can be resolved. Specifically, researchers have distinguished between the belief that the world is a just place to the self (BJW-self) and the belief that it is a just place for other people generally (BJW-others). Lipkus, Dalbert and Siegler (1996) measured BJW-self and BJW-others with 16 closely matched items (e.g., 'I feel that I get what I deserve' and 'I feel that people get what they deserve'). These two spheres of BJW are positively correlated, but only moderately so. Among relatively privileged samples, such as professionals and university students in developed economies, scores on the BJW-self scale were much higher than on the BJW-others scale (Bègue, 2002; Bègue & Bastounis, 2003). Crucially, it turns out that BJW-self is correlated with psychological wellbeing but not harsh social attitudes. In contrast, BJW-others is correlated with harsh social attitudes but not wellbeing (Bègue & Bastounis, 2003; Dalbert, 2001; Lipkus et al., 1996; Sutton & Douglas, 2005).

Indeed, the two spheres of belief are sometimes associated with the same outcomes but in opposite directions. For example, a study of at-risk British teenagers found that strong beliefs in the justice of the world to the self were associated with reduced intentions to engage in antisocial behaviour, whereas the more strongly teenagers believed the world was a just place for others, the more they intended to be antisocial (Sutton & Winnard, 2007). Moreover, a study of Australian students showed that BJW-self is positively correlated with the tendency to forgive others, whereas BJW-others is negatively correlated with forgiveness (Strelan & Sutton, 2011; for experimental evidence see Lucas et al., 2018). Thus, in principle, it seems that individuals can 'have their cake', by endorsing BJW-self and accruing psychological benefits, and 'eat it too', by rejecting BJW-others and its harsher social connotations (see Figure 14.14). This makes sense from the perspective of just world theory, because it is the personal contract that matters. Thus the belief that 'I get what I deserve' is of primary psychological interest. This belief is related to, but separate from, the belief that others get what they deserve (Wenzel, Schindler & Reinhard, 2017).

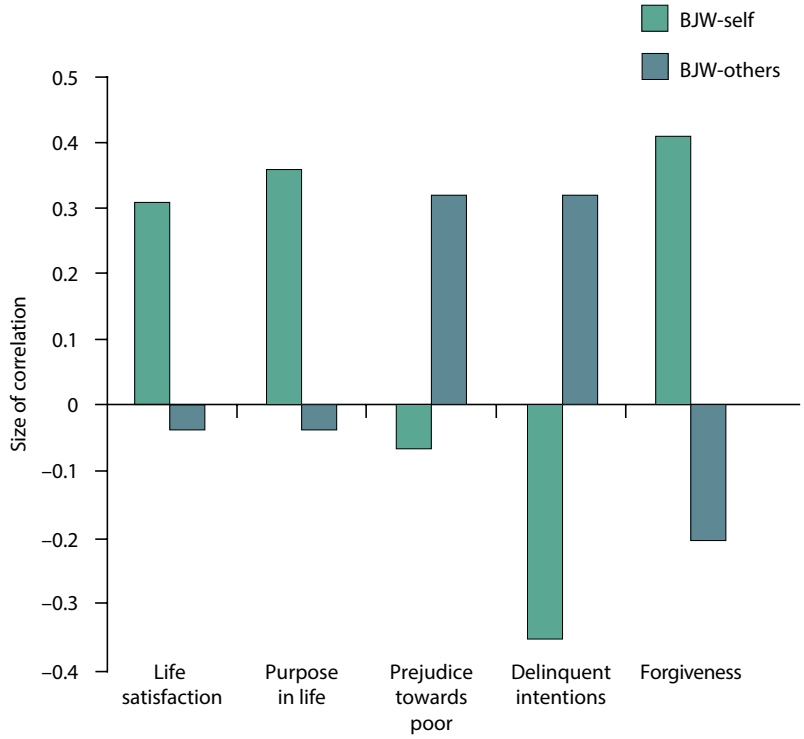

FIGURE 14.14 Correlation between outcome measures and the two spheres of BJW (measured in standardized beta weights) Although BJW-self and BJW-others are positively related to each other, they are related to quite different variables, and sometimes related to the same variable in opposite directions. BJW-self, but not BJW-others, is related to indices of psychological wellbeing, including life satisfaction (Sutton & Douglas, 2005) and purpose in life (Sutton, Douglas, Wilkin et al., 2008). BJW-others, but not BJW-self, is related to intergroup attitudes that justify inequality and the misfortunes of lower status groups such as the poor (Sutton & Douglas, 2005). BJW-self is negatively related to antisocial behavioural tendencies, such as delinquent intentions among at-risk youth, whereas BJW-others is positively related to them (Sutton & Winnard, 2007). Also, BJW-self is positively related to forgiveness, whereas BJW-others is negatively related to the same variable (Bartholomaeus & Strelan, 2016; Strelan & Sutton, 2011). The overall pattern of these results suggests that BJW-self is adaptive, bringing both social and psychological benefits, whereas BJW-others is maladaptive, incurring social costs with no apparent psychological benefit.

TIME TO REFLECT

Research on the effects of the belief in a just world is correlational: individual differences in the strength of this belief are measured, and then related to outcome variables of interest. Of course, this leaves the crucial question of causality open. Do you think the belief in a just world can be experimentally manipulated? How much does longitudinal research help? You can search the research literature to help you, if you like.

Just world theory has undoubtedly been one of the most influential and successful theories in social psychology, able to relate variables as diverse as altruism, impression formation, prejudice, physical and psychological health, and even gambling (Callan, Ellard Shead & Hodgins, 2008) to an underlying human commitment to justice. That said, the theory has not been without its controversies. One issue has been whether the belief in the just world is really delusional. It is clear that the human need for justice influences our behaviour in surprising and sometimes unfortunate ways, which can ironically sometimes cause us to compound the original injustice. But it is not clear that these reactions are necessarily out of touch with reality.

Let us illustrate with one of the most striking and convincing tests of just world theory. Hafer (2000) had participants watch an upsetting video in which a young woman recounted how she had contracted HIV as a result of bad luck (a condom broke). Before watching the video, an experimental group of participants had been asked to list their long-term life goals. According to just world theory, the personal contract is at the heart of just world beliefs – people need to plan in order to reap long-term rewards; this, in turn, requires a certain degree of faith in justice – that our efforts and sacrifices will pay off. Thus, planning for the future should make people even more motivated to somehow construe the innocent victim's situation as just. And that is what happened. Compared to control participants, the experimental group were more prone to attributing blame and negative personality characteristics to the victim. Undoubtedly, this is strong evidence for just world theory, but the issue we are considering here is whether the claim that just world beliefs are delusional is warranted. A problem is that in this experiment, as in others, there is no right or wrong answer on the scales that participants complete. Rather, participants are required to circle a number from one to seven, say, which best represents their opinion.

ETHICS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Eliciting distress in studies of the 'just world'

In Chapter 9, we considered the ethics of Milgram's (1974) well-known studies of obedience. Participants displayed signs of intense anxiety and emotional distress. Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment was also intensely distressful for participants, and Zimbardo (2006) himself criticized Haslam and Reicher's (2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008) BBC Prison Study on the grounds that it was unethical to run such a study again. In these studies of social influence, however, the distress that participants experienced was not the outcome the experimenters wanted to elicit. It was more or less a by-product, although interesting in its own right, of processes such as obedience, tyranny and intergroup conflict.

In contrast, research on the justice motive, particularly research concerned with the blame and derogation of victims, often sets out to cause participants distress. The reason for this is that theory assumes people consciously acknowledge that the world is an unjust place, but at a less rational, preconscious level, they defend their implicit faith in the justice of the world by any means they can. Intense emotional impact is therefore assumed to be required in order to break through the veneer of rationality. Lerner (1998) stated of experiments that do not emotionally impact participants sufficiently:

> With little at stake to be gained or lost, the participants' main incentives are not to re-establish justice … but rather to manage their impressions. For the most part, they try to be cooperative participants, and, of course, not do anything that would threaten their self or public esteem by appearing foolish or embarrassing. (p. 389)

Many just world studies require participants to blame and derogate innocent victims of misfortune, such as rape survivors (Bal & van den Bos, 2010; Kleinke & Meyer, 1990; Pinciotti & Orcutt, in press), people living with HIV/AIDS (Hafer, 2000) and children who suffer horrendous injuries as a result of electrocution (Correia, Vala & Aguiar, 2007). To overtly blame and derogate such people cuts strongly against social and moral norms and so comprises a threat to participants' self-image, and probably seems to them to threaten their image in the eyes of the experimenter, too.

Thus, to disrupt socially desirable responding, and motivate people to defend the belief in a just world, researchers set out to create materials that are emotionally impactful and distressing. They use videos in which victims, sometimes real people rather than actors, recount upsetting personal stories of misfortune, loss and ongoing suffering (Callan, Kay, Davidenko & Ellard, 2009; Hafer, 2000) or place participants directly in front of a victim who appears to be suffering intensely (Lerner & Simmons, 1966).

Is this ethically warranted? A key issue is *informed consent*. Participants need to know they are signing up for a potentially distressing experience. The problem is that by telling participants this, researchers may make participants aware that intense emotions are an intrinsic part of the scientific theory behind the experiment. This might cause them to hold *privately held hypotheses* about the experiment that can interfere with their responses (cf. Silver, Wortman & Klos, 1982). Neither is it scientifically acceptable to alert participants to the

fact that they will be asked to blame and derogate the victims, even though this is likely to come across as a nasty surprise to many participants. By signalling to participants that the study is about perceived justice, researchers are likely to invalidate their studies since participants' normal efforts to present themselves as rational, decent people are likely to be bolstered (Lerner, 1998). As far as possible, researchers need to inform participants about the nature, and even the aims, of the study in advance, but they cannot do so with complete candour, otherwise the scientific integrity of the experiment is lost. To inform participants that they may experience distress in the experiment is an absolute must, but to inform them exactly how or why they might find their experience distressing is, unfortunately, not possible.

Questions

1. What other ethical considerations are important in determining whether these studies are ethically warranted? What ethical safeguards should researchers build in to such studies? You might want to reread the section on ethics in Chapter 1.
2. Although Lerner (1998) distinguishes between low-impact and high-impact studies, which elicit moderate or high levels of psychological distress, there has not been a study that systematically manipulates the emotional impact of an experiment and determines whether this affects victim derogation and other forms of just world defence. Also, no study to our knowledge has even correlated the extent of emotional arousal with just world defences. So, we do not have the kind of firm evidence that emotional impact matters that we would normally require to accept a scientific hypothesis. What ethical implications does this have for the conduct of just world studies?

Fortunately for just world theory, studies suggest that the concern with justice can indeed cause people to distort reality. For example, Callan, Powell and Ellard (2007) asked participants to look at a photo of a young woman and told them they would have to identify her later on. They then told participants that there had been a fire at her house and she had either suffered greatly or not very much. Finally, they presented a set of photographs that were digitally altered versions of the original they had earlier seen. The researchers had subtly altered these photographs in order to make the woman more or less physically attractive. When asked which photograph was the original they had seen, participants selected photographs in which the woman was significantly less attractive than the original. Put differently, they misremembered the woman, thinking she was less attractive than she was in reality. This is true victim derogation – evaluating a victim more negatively than is objectively warranted.

In a follow-up paper, Callan et al. (2009) found that participants misremembered the amount won by a lottery winner, recalling a sum of money too low if they had learned that the winner was a 'bad' person. Participants especially did this if their justice beliefs had already been threatened by watching a distressing video of a victim (see Figure 14.15). These findings are in line with suggestions that

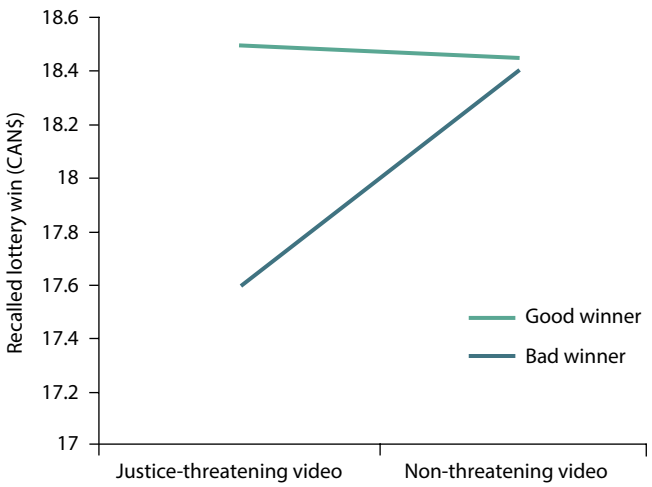

FIGURE 14.15 Recall and justice beliefs Participants were told that a man had won CAN$18.42 million in a lottery, and were given information that he was of good or bad moral character (friendly and a good tipper, or an unfriendly non-tipper). Later, they were asked to recall this number. They recalled a lower number when the lottery winner was 'bad' and after watching an apparently unrelated video that threatened the just world (a videoed interview with a young woman who had contracted HIV/AIDS because a condom broke, and for whom antiviral drugs were not effective; a manipulation borrowed from a study by Hafer, 2000, we read about earlier). In all except this condition, participants accurately recalled the size of the lottery win (the mean recalled win was not significantly different than the actual win).

Source: Data from Callan et al. (2009)

memory is essentially a constructive process in which a reality is built rather than faithfully reproduced. They show specifically that it is a process in which a just world can be created without our awareness.

Although responses to individual victims can be shown to be irrational, to date there is no real evidence that people consciously endorse just world beliefs that are irrational. Again, BJW questionnaires ask participants to make responses on scales in which there is no right or wrong answer. At first glance, the finding that people endorse the BJW-self view more than the BJW-others view looks like delusional thinking – another manifestation of the self-enhancing biases we noted in Chapter 2. How can the world be especially just to you, while being unjust to others? However, these findings are typically obtained from privileged samples who may have a point – they are immune from the famine, diseases and political oppression that affect many of the less fortunate people in the world. Indeed, when we ask less privileged samples about the justice of the world, they do not show this bias (Sutton & Winnard, 2007). Further, even privileged individuals do not think they are unique in their receipt of justice – they rate the world as more just to themselves than to others generally, but do not think they get any more justice than other people in the same social demographic as themselves (Sutton, Douglas, Wilkin et al., 2008).

Recent versions of just world theory explain why people sometimes look like they have irrational worldviews but other times seem to be able to acknowledge that the world is not necessarily a just place. The key is that people's commitment to justice is deep-rooted since childhood and by adulthood is largely preconscious or automatic (Lerner, 1998; Lerner & Clayton, 2011). They are confronted with evidence of injustice almost every day of their lives, through personal experience and the media, and it would be absurd – and undesirable – to say out loud that, in general, victims deserve what they get or are not worthy of concern. Thus, at a conscious level, we are able to acknowledge that, at least as far as other people are concerned, the world is not a just place. But unconsciously, we are inclined to construe events as if they were just. Thus, if our cognitive resources are overwhelmed by strong emotions, or we are cognitively busy, the tendency to see the world as a just place should be heightened.

Immanent justice reasoning The superstitious attribution of good and bad outcomes to unrelated good and bad deeds.

Some research supports this view. Callan et al. (2010) presented carefully constructed fake newspaper reports of an accident to participants, complete with photographs. For example, a story related how a swimming coach had been killed when a tree fell onto his car. The newspaper story mentioned either that the swimming coach was much beloved by his community for all the work he did, or that he was in disgrace, having been caught stealing from his class. Clearly, there was no plausible causal relationship between the moral character of the swimming coach and the freak accident that killed him. Nonetheless, participants made this link, agreeing that the accident was a consequence of his behaviour more when he had been stealing than when his conduct had been unimpeachable. This is an example of **immanent justice reasoning** – the superstitious attribution of good and bad outcomes to unrelated good and bad deeds,

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which was once thought to be the preserve of children (Jose, 1990; Piaget, 1932), but has more recently been shown to be a pitfall into which adults fall, too (e.g., Raman & Winer, 2004). Further, this effect was only significant when participants were under cognitive load, that is, trying to mentally rehearse a 12-digit as opposed to a 2-digit number in order to recall it later. Thus, when we consciously think things through in a calm and collected way, we do not necessarily conclude that, in general terms, justice reigns and people get what they deserve. When we do not think things through, we appear to be prone to an automatic tendency to appraise events as if they were just (see Callan, Sutton, Harvey & Dawtry, 2014, for a review).

The group-value model

Just world theory has shaped later theorizing about the need for justice in particular contexts. One such theory is the **group-value model** proposed by Lind and Tyler (1988; also Tyler, 1994). According to this model, people care about justice not only because of the outcomes they expect to receive (as assumed by equity theory), but also because their social identity is important. In particular, people care about the status and respect they receive within their social groups. The fairness of the outcomes they experience (distributive justice) and the processes they are subjected to (procedural justice) tell them about their status. If they are treated fairly, they assume they are held in high regard. As a result, they are more likely to identify with the group and work hard in the interests of the group, making sacrifices for it if necessary. If they are not treated fairly, they experience a state of threat in which they are not confident about their status within the group. Many research findings support this model. For example, employees who perceive that they receive procedural justice are more likely to perform so-called 'extra-role' behaviours, working harder than they are obliged to in order to serve the organization for which they work (Moorman, Blakely & Niehoff, 1998). Receiving more procedural justice from authorities such as the police (Piccoli, De Witte & Reisel, 2017) and managers (Maxwell, Moore, Fontaine & Smith, in press) makes people more inclined to respect their authority and comply with their requests, crucially, because it also encourages them to identify more strongly with the group (Tyler & Blader, 2003). The moral is clear for all authorities – treat people with fairness, or, at the very least, convince them that you are treating them fairly.

Group-value model Model explaining that people care about the status and respect they receive within their social groups. The fairness of outcomes (distributive justice) and the processes (procedural justice) are an indicator of their status.

Although the distinction between distributive and procedural justice is interesting and important (e.g., Leonardelli & Toh, 2011; Lucas et al., 2018; Tyler, 2012), people do not always have enough knowledge to determine whether their outcomes are fair. If you do not know how much the person in the office next to you is getting paid, or the grades that other students are getting for similar work, then you cannot evaluate the distributive justice of your outcomes. In such cases, there is a good chance that you will rely on information as to whether the process by which your pay and grades are determined appears to be fair. For example, were you given feedback with your grade? Did a second person also mark your work, or check the grade? In such situations, if you feel that you have received procedural justice, you will also tend to assume that you have received distributive justice, that is, your final outcome was fair, relative to other people.

Van den Bos, Lind, Vermunt and Wilke (1997) demonstrated this effect in a study with Dutch students from Leiden University. Participants worked on tasks, ostensibly in pairs, in order to earn lottery tickets. Some participants were given 'voice' – a chance to express their opinion on how the lottery tickets should be divided between themselves and their partner. Other students were given no 'voice' and so were not able to express this opinion. 'Voice' is a key aspect of procedural justice – people tend to perceive processes that give them voice as fair, and processes that do not give them voice as unfair (Lind, Kanfer & Earley, 1990). Results showed that after receiving their payment, participants relied on whether or not they had 'voice' to evaluate the outcome itself, but only when they had no idea how much their partner had been

paid. When they knew whether their partner had been paid, they relied on social comparison to determine whether their payments were just or not, and their satisfaction with the payment they received did not depend on whether or not they had voice. Thus, van den Bos et al. (1997) argued that people use procedural justice indicators as a *heuristic* (Chapter 3), because they often – even typically – lack all the information they need to evaluate the distributive justice (Figure 14.16).

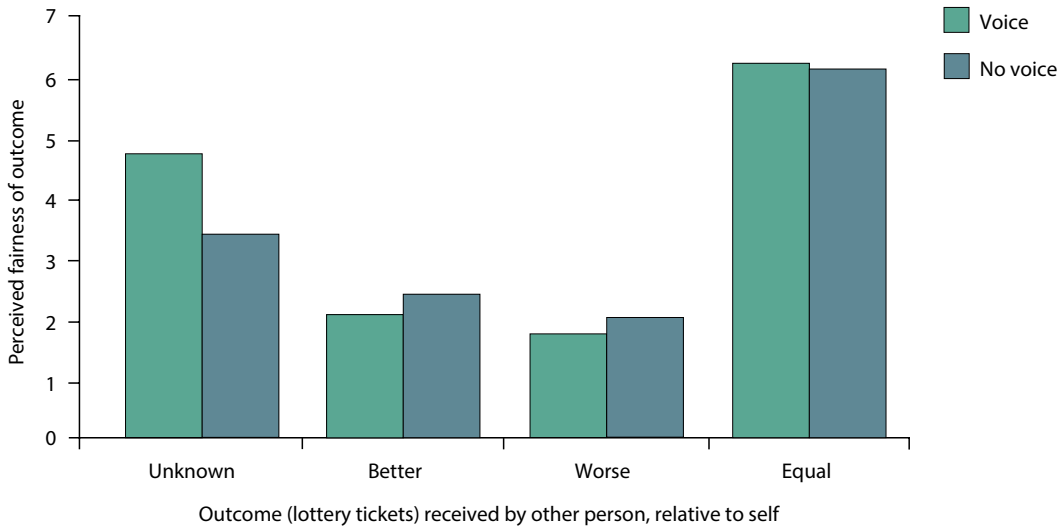

FIGURE 14.16 The fair process effect When participants did not know how much the other person had received, they lacked the information needed to judge whether their own outcome was fair. In this condition, they relied on their knowledge of procedural justice – whether they had been given 'voice', meaning the chance to express their opinion. This is the 'fair process effect' (van den Bos, 2015), in which judgements of distributive justice are made on the basis of procedural justice. The fair process effect disappeared when participants knew how much the other person had received, and so could evaluate distributive justice independently. The fair process effect has since been shown to matter in diverse areas of life including students' evaluations of their teachers (Tripp, Jiang, Olson & Graso, in press) and how taxpayers accept decisions by tax authorities (Niesiobędzka & Kołodziej, 2017).

Source: van den Bos et al. (1997)

System justification theory Theory that people's dependence on social systems for wealth and security motivates them to justify those social systems and see them as fair.

Depressed entitlement effect The tendency for women, when given the chance to determine their own pay in an experimental task, to pay themselves less than men.

System justification theory

Another major theory spawned by the just world theory is **system justification theory** (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, 2019). The core idea of this theory is that people's dependence on social systems for wealth and security motivates them to justify those social systems – to see them as essentially fair and functional. Thus, dissonance is aroused when there is a patent defect in the system, so that people are subject to unfair inequalities, for example.

Early work on system justification focused on how people in low status groups react to the injustices they experience. As much or even more than high status group members, members of low status groups often internalize negative stereotypes of their group that serve to justify their lowly position (as in, 'no wonder we are poor – look how lazy we are!'), to believe that the government acts in the interests of the people, and that economic inequality is legitimate and necessary (Jost, Pelham, Sheldon & Sullivan, 2003). As if justifying the tendency for women to be paid less than men for the same work, female participants display a **depressed entitlement effect** (Callahan-Levy & Meese, 1979; Major, 1994). In a study, when given the chance to determine their own pay for work done in an experimental task, they paid themselves less than male participants, even though independent judges rated their work as being of the same quality (Jost, 1997).

More recently, research on system justification has gone beyond the reactions of low status individuals to their plight. For example, one way that people justify a system, regardless of their own status, is to use complementary stereotyping – as in 'poor but happy'. These stereotypes imply that 'poverty has its rewards and affluence its drawbacks' (Kay & Jost, 2003, p. 823), making economic inequality feel somewhat more legitimate. Other work highlights how the motive to justify social systems is especially strong when one depends on the system and it is seen as something that cannot be changed. For example, van der Toorn et al. (2015) found that employees were more likely to view their supervisor as more legitimate when they felt more financially dependent on their jobs.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Economic inequality and economic crisis

In the world's developed economies, economic inequality – the difference between the wealth of the richest and poorest sections of society – has risen steadily over recent decades (Galbraith, 2012; Western, Bloome, Sosnaud & Tach, 2012), although the trend may have slowed since 2000 (Ravallion, 2014). In a sustained investigation of the effects that this might have, the sociologists Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) explored correlations between the extent of inequality in 25 of the world's richest countries and a range of important outcomes. It turns out that many so-called 'modern ills' are closely associated with inequality. Inequality was correlated with mental illness, lower levels of trust, shorter life expectancy, infant mortality, obesity, poor educational performance, teenage births, homicides and imprisonment rates. Although Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) suggest that all but the very richest people are harmed psychologically by inequality, more recent evidence suggests that it affects only those who struggle to make ends meet (Sommet, Morselli & Spini, 2018). Either way, the psychological damage wrought by inequality seems in itself to be unequally distributed.

It is not entirely clear why inequality is such a problem. Social psychology suggests a few answers to this question. As we have seen, people across cultures value equality (Deutsch, 1975; Schwarz, 1992). It is strongly associated in people's minds with fairness, morality and justice (Chen, 1999; Franks & Scherr, 2019), is a crucial concept in the field of human rights (Conte, Davidson & Burchill, 2004), and is a simple and popular rule for allocating resources (Samuelson & Allison, 1994). In experimental games involving decisions about the allocation of money, people will pay money out of their own accounts in order to ensure that allocations are reasonably equal (Camerer, 2003). A 2011 survey showed that Americans underestimated the extent of wealth inequality in their

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country, yet wanted it to be still more equal than their rose-tinted beliefs suggested (Norton & Ariely, 2011 – but see Eriksson & Simpson, 2012 for evidence that Americans may not underestimate wealth inequality if the questions are framed differently, and Arsenio, 2015, for a review). In keeping with a line from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that 'there is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so' (Act II, Scene II), many negative outcomes of inequality arise because, in general, people do not like it.

System justification theory and just world theory both suggest that people are threatened by the perceived injustice associated with high levels of inequality (social dominance theory does not necessarily make this presumption). Processes of motivated social cognition (see Chapters 2 and 3) cause them to think in ways that minimize the perceived size or unfairness of inequality (Jost & van der Toorn, 2012; Kteily, Sheehy-Skeffington & Ho, 2017; O'Brien & Major, 2005; Sutton, Douglas, Wilkin et al., 2008). Thus, increases in inequality may strengthen the motivation to blame and derogate the less well-off in society, not just by those better off, but also by themselves. It may also demotivate people from perceiving injustice and resolving to change it through protest and other forms of collective

action (van Zomeren, Spears & Leach, 2008) (see Chapter 12). There is considerable evidence that inequality and relative deprivation are more distressing for people who perceive them as unjust (Kessler & Mummendey, 2002; Napier & Jost, 2008). This led Sutton, Cichocka and van der Toorn (2012) to argue that 'the essential dilemma facing individuals is a choice between coping with inequality and combating inequality [since] psychological mechanisms that support one tend to be at odds with those that support the other' (p. 132). This argument suggests that inequality can be self-perpetuating – as it increases, so does the desire to legitimize and comply with society's hierarchies.

There are other ways in which inequality perpetuates itself. Some evidence suggests that people experimentally assigned to a powerful 'leader' role subsequently act less morally but evaluate themselves as more moral than those assigned to a 'subordinate' role. In other words, inequality may promote the hypocrisy of elites, causing them to act in their own interests without realizing they are doing so (Lammers, Stapel & Galinsky, 2010). Consistent with this notion that privilege may erode moral motivation, we saw earlier in this chapter that richer people tend to give proportionately less of their income to charity than poorer people (Greve, 2009; Piff et al., 2010). Also, in social dilemma games, people are less cooperative if their initial allocations of money are unequal than if they are all given the same amount (Anderson, Mellor & Milyo, 2008). This may happen because inequality undermines the trust that is essential for social cooperation (Putnam, 2000). Less sharing in social dilemmas means less for all – and also means that players will end up with more unequal sums of money. Further, as inequality increases, children and adolescents from less wealthy backgrounds tend increasingly to disengage from education (Teachman, 1987).

There is controversy about whether economic inequality is the price we have to pay for economic growth. Correlations between inequality and growth are mixed and depend on factors such as the type of government a country has (Banerjee & Duflo, 2003; Bjornskov, 2008; Forbes, 2000). However, research by economic historians suggests that periods of heightened inequality tend to precipitate economic crises (Reich, 2010; Stockhammer, 2015). Greater wealth inequality means there is more capital available for risky, speculative investments and 'bubbles', in which assets become increasingly overpriced until they crash in value. Research like that of Lammers et al. (2010) also suggests that it may erode the moral judgements of those in charge of the resources.

This appears to have been the backdrop for the international banking crisis in September 2008, when the global financial crisis that had been brewing for a year went critical. A cascade of bad debts meant that the value of financial assets evaporated, and normal lending between banks ceased. It was widely thought within government and banking circles that within days, if not hours, ATMs would be unable to dispense money (G. Brown, 2011). Thanks to the actions of world governments, this looming cataclysm was avoided.

But in averting disaster, governments suspended principles such as justice and equality. Instead, governments took on the bad debts of investment banks. In this way, bank debts were transferred to taxpayers, who were also to be affected by the resulting cuts in public services. To illustrate, after the Irish government agreed to bail out its banks, the average Irish person owed something in the order of US$500,000 to international lenders (CNBC, 2011).

Questions

1. History shows that levels of inequality peak and then fall again. So although we have seen that inequality may set up a vicious cycle and perpetuate itself, there mst be some conditions that break the cycle. The classics and history scholar Scheidel (2018) is pessimistic, arguing that only catatrophes such as wars and inequality can reverse long-term increases in inequality. Based on what you have read in this chapter (much of Chapter 12 is also relevant), what psychological factors do you think might help reduce inequality again?
2. There is remarkably little experimental evidence that inequality causes reductions in wellbeing. The evidence cited by Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) is overwhelmingly correlational. What barriers are there to manipulating inequality and seeing what effects it has? How might you do this in experiments? Also, take a look at the paper by Pickett and Wilkinson (2015) where, in correlational research, several criteria are assessed together to provide support for the hypothesis that income equality causes poorer health.
3. Search for 'skyscrapers economic crisis' online to find interesting material on the correlation between high-rise building developments and subsequent crashes.

STUDENT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Check out the Student Project on page 670 by Tanya Schrader from Staffordshire University. Tanya studied how belief in conspiracy theories about feminism is related to rape myth acceptance. It is relevant to the study of victim blaming in this chapter, and Chapter 13 on aggression.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, we considered the positive social psychological phenomenon of altruism and the reasons why people make personal sacrifices for others. We also discussed how people respond to social dilemmas and how cooperation can be encouraged. Finally, we considered why justice is such an important factor for people. You will have learned that:

- Altruism is an action that is performed to benefit another person without benefiting the self. It is a specific example of the more general phenomena of helping behaviour and prosocial behaviour.
- Social psychologists' interest in altruism was captured by the phenomenon of bystander intervention – why do people often stand by and fail to help when something terrible happens? Theorists have argued that as bystander numbers increase, people are less likely to interpret the situation as a problem and are therefore less likely to assume responsibility (diffusion of responsibility). Another reason is pluralistic ignorance, where people wrongly assume, based on others' actions, that they endorse a particular norm of 'standing by'.
- Early theorists argued that there may be an 'altruistic personality', or a stable psychological makeup that predisposes people to help others. Several individual differences characteristics such as Machiavellianism, empathy and the belief in a just world have been found to correlate with altruistic behaviours. However, situational factors such as culture and perceived similarity of the target to the self also influence altruistic behaviour.
- Some researchers have concluded that people often help others in order to help themselves, therefore there is no such thing as 'true' or 'pure' altruism. However, other theorists have argued that the act of altruism can indeed be 'pure', and driven by empathic concern for the welfare of others. There is evidence for both perspectives. Altruism may serve internal rather than external rewards.
- Some theorists posit that altruism has an evolutionary origin and that people are altruistic (to their own kin) as a way of promoting the successful reproduction of their own genes. Others argue that altruism occurs because it is also repaid.
- Aspects of the target requiring help significantly influence whether or not they receive it. In particular, age, gender, attractiveness and personality determine the degree of help received.
- The study of altruism is also influenced by the study of how people deal with social dilemmas such as the prisoner's dilemma, public goods dilemmas and commons dilemmas. When they set aside their own interests for the collective, they are cooperating, whereas when they act in their own interests at the expense of the collective, they are defecting. Both situational and personality factors determine behaviour in social dilemmas. A strong sense of identification with the group also encourages cooperation. Mistrust can be resolved by communication. Cooperation can also be improved by rewarding cooperators and punishing defectors, even at personal expense to the self (e.g., altruistic punishment).

- Justice exists when people treat each other as they are entitled or deserve to be treated. Distributive justice refers to the justice of the outcome and procedural justice refers to the justice of the procedures. Theorists argue that justice has two important functions – it improves functioning and benefits the collective. Culture plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of justice, but three key principles (equity, equality and need) of justice appear to be universal.
- Social psychological theories explain the importance of justice to people. Social exchange theory explains that people try to maximize personal benefits and minimize personal costs. People invest and so that things are fair, they expect that others will do the same. Equity theory explains that people compare and evaluate the net benefits they receive compared to those received by others. Fairness means that nobody over- or underbenefits.
- According to just world theory, people have a deep-seated need to perceive the world as a just place. In childhood, people make a 'personal contract' with the world to commit to the rules of justice. The belief in a just world predicts many psychological and health outcomes. However, it may not always be good for the group insofar as it can breed prejudice towards the disadvantaged. Belief in a just world for the self and for others predicts different outcomes.
- According to the group-value model, people's social identity is important to their perception of justice. The fairness of the outcomes they experience and the process tell people about their status within the group. System justification theory proposes that people's dependence on social systems for wealth and security motivates them to justify those social systems as fair and just.
- People also collaborate to socially construct a just world through communication processes, as can be seen in work from the discourse analysis tradition on the role of language in legitimizing social arrangements.

In this penultimate chapter, we have considered the human impulse to help and to seek justice. We have also considered some of the social and psychological barriers that prevent people from always following this impulse. This chapter concludes our coversage of the topics of social psychology. In the next and final chapter, we consider what the things you have learned in your study of social psychology might mean for you.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Having read this chapter, here are some essay-style questions which you can attempt in preparation for your examinations:

1. Critically evaluate social psychological theory and research on bystander intervention.
2. Are people ever completely altruistic? Discuss with reference to social psychological theory and research on prosocial, helping and altruistic behaviour.
3. Based on theory and research on how people deal with social dilemmas, explain why people often punish others for their defection, even at personal risk to the self.
4. Describe and critically evaluate the research supporting social dominance theory.

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Encouraging energy saving among students

Ultimately, everybody wins if people save energy. However, when people engage in prosocial behaviour such as this, there are also personal prices to pay. For example, energy saving can be inconvenient because it can interfere with everyday activities. Also, going out of one's way to save energy can feel rather fruitless if one feels that others are not pulling their weight to do the same. Of course, there are personal as well as

group-level advantages. For example, homeowners who conserve energy also save money on their bills. Energy-saving campaigners can therefore appeal to people's desire to keep their costs down. But what about university students, for whom such incentives may be less relevant? Perhaps students are renting student accommodation and have no say in the types of light bulbs they use. Perhaps they are unable to personally control thermostats. Potentially, they share bills with other students and cannot limit the amount of energy used by others. How does one design an intervention to reduce energy use among students?

Imagine you are a social psychology consultant who has been approached by the local council. The council has observed that university students in the town are relatively high energy users and would like to design an intervention to reduce energy usage among this group. Your job is to help the council, with your knowledge and expertise in social psychology, to put together this intervention.

In a job such as this, your first task is typically to search the psychological literature for theory and evidence on the topic. Based on this knowledge, you would then make recommendations for an intervention based on what appears to be the most promising and effective principles of intervention.

The following questions are designed to guide you through this type of process:

1. Conduct an online search using a database such as Google Scholar to find at least three energy use interventions that have been designed in the past ten years. What search terms would you use?
2. Read the articles and take some notes about the nature of the interventions. For example, what theories did the researchers draw upon? What was involved in the interventions? Were the interventions successful? How did the researchers measure the success of the interventions?
3. Crucially, who were the targets (that is, participants) of the interventions? Note again that you have been asked to design an intervention to apply to *university students*. In what ways are students potentially different from the samples tested in the studies concerned? Specifically, are students' energy-saving concerns and behaviours likely to be different from previously tested samples? Would the interventions you have found be relevant to students, or could they be modified to apply to students? In thinking about these issues, consider carefully what students are able to do to reduce the amount of energy they use. It may be useful to find a list of behaviours that are recommended to reduce energy use in general (e.g., closing curtains, switching off lights in empty rooms, using thermostats correctly, using tumble dryers less), and think about the feasibility of recommending each of these to students.
4. Think about other features of the intervention. For example, if the intervention involves recommending that students switch off lights and so on, what is the reason for them to do so? Will an argument that appeals to the fight against climate change be more likely to succeed? Or, would students respond better to an argument based on a financial incentive (that is, saving money)? On what evidence are you basing this choice?
5. Decide exactly what you plan to do and why.
6. Now, write a brief summary of a report you would provide to the council. This should fit on two sides of an A4 page. Your report summary should include:
    - a title
    - theoretical accounts that have dealt with energy-saving behaviour and the barriers to energy-saving behaviour
    - an evaluation of different approaches to intervention – which is most likely to be effective? In particular, what should be involved in a potential intervention for a student sample?
    - recommendations for steps that the council should take to reduce energy use among students
    - recommendations for how the council should test the success of its intervention
    - a reference list (citations should be made in text, in APA format).

Visit the website for this book to access to a wide range of resources including videos and self-test multiple choice questions to help you get to grips with this chapter:

www.macmillanihe.com/sutton-social-psychology-2e

FURTHER READING

Feigin, S., Owens, G., & Goodyear-Smith, F. (2018). Theories of human altruism: A systematic review. *Journal of Psychiatry and Brain Functions*, *1*(1), 5. A systematic (and open-access) review of research on altruism between 1960 and 2014.

Jost, J.T. (2019). A quarter century of system justification theory: Questions, answers, criticisms, and societal applications. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *58*(2), 263–314. An invited review by the main author of system justification theory, which has become very influential (and controversial) in social and political psychology. See also a number of additional review articles, some critical and some supportive of the theory, in the same issue of this journal.

Van Lange, P.A., Joireman, J., & Milinski, M. (2018). Climate change: What psychology can offer in terms of insights and solutions. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *27*(4), 269–74. Brings together a range of social scientific perspectives on how to encourage sustainable behaviour.

Wilkinson, R., & Pickett, K. (2010). *The spirit level: Why equality is better for everyone*. London: Penguin. Influential and easy-to-read sociological analysis of the effects of inequality. It is light on convincing psychological content, and has attracted criticisms, but is convincingly written and thought-provoking.

CHAPTER 15 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND YOU

Now that you have encountered the major concerns, concepts and methods of social psychology, it is time to take an overview and consider some of the key messages of the discipline. In doing so, we aim to show in this final chapter how some overarching principles of social psychology can be applied not only to your study of the discipline but to your future lives. Also, by highlighting some of the many skills and benefits that social psychology can offer you, we hope to show you how studying social psychology can have a major positive impact on your future career.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER:

- The wisdom of social psychology
- Social psychology and you

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By now, you have read about the theories and concepts of social psychology. The journey you have been on is not just a process of accumulating knowledge to get you through your coursework and examinations. Along the way, we hope, guided by your teachers, peers, our writing and the exercises we have suggested for you, that you have developed a set of thinking and problem-solving tools. In your hands, these tools can enrich whatever professional and personal journey you take in the future.

One of the reasons we have written this chapter is to help you reflect on everything you have learned. What are the key insights of social psychology to date? What concepts, skills and perspectives can you take forward into the next phase of your lives? We also hope that this chapter will enhance your critical reflection on social psychology as a whole and the arguments and claims that you will encounter in everyday life.

In the first section of this chapter, we attempt to distil some of the most important items of wisdom that have emerged from social psychology. We think all readers may find these useful. We also think you are likely to find these items of wisdom useful in providing you with an overview of social psychology, considered both as a disciplinary body of knowledge and as a disciplined set of processes by which knowledge is produced. The chapter concludes with a discussion of career and further study opportunities available to students of social psychology.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Make a list of some of the social issues that can potentially benefit from social psychological theories and findings. Jot down a few points to explain why social psychology is relevant and how insights from social psychology could help.

THE WISDOM OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Lying behind the many theories that social psychology has produced, and the findings that have been obtained, what does the study of social psychology teach us? In the following sections, we have tried to distil some of the key pieces of wisdom that we feel we have acquired over two decades of studying social psychology. We expect that the wisdom of social psychology is relevant to the personal and professional lives of just about anyone who has picked up this book. We therefore hope that the wisdom of social psychology will enrich your life, even if the course you are taking will be your last formal contact with the discipline. In the meantime, while you are studying social psychology, we also think that understanding its key themes will help you approach specific theories, findings and pieces of coursework wisely. This could never be an exhaustive list of the insights and pieces of wisdom that you can expect to acquire from the study of social psychology, but based on our experiences of doing social psychological research, reading about it, and talking to colleagues at home and abroad, we think that *most* social psychologists would essentially agree with the following take-home principles.

Social psychology can be studied scientifically

You may often hear it said that psychology, still less social psychology, is not a legitimate scientific subject. Love, hatred, envy, sexual desire, happiness, culture and personal philosophies are too intangible, intricate and hard to describe to be properly studied by scientific means. Many people have a strong intuition that the private and unique character of

each person's individual experiences make them impossible for other people to study. Take the example of love, which we considered in Chapter 7. Intuitively, there is no topic more magical, subjective and resistant to scientific analysis. But, as we have learned, qualitative methods allow participants to articulate their experiences of love and relationships. Self-report questionnaires capture meaningful variation in the intensity and nature of love. Correlational and experimental studies have uncovered some of the factors that determine how intense love is and how long it lasts. However imperfectly or incompletely, this most intense and sometimes irrational aspect of human behaviour can be explained, scientifically studied and modified. The use of surveys, experiments, observational and qualitiative methods does not serve to deny the individuality of people's experiences, but rather help us to undersand how and why people are different: what personal, situational and cultural factors shape our mental, emotional and social lives. One of the morals of social psychology is therefore *do not succumb to mysticism* about the causes of human experience and behaviour: scientific methods have a place, along with art, literature and the humanities, in helping people understand themselves and each other.

Scientific explanations are incomplete, imperfect and in flux

One thing you must have noticed about social psychology as you have been reading this book is that there are often several explanations for the same phenomenon. Take aggression (Chapter 13) as an example. We discussed explanations for aggressive behaviour that invoked genes, specific hormones and neurotransmitters, gender roles, alcohol, frustration, learning from others, cultural scripts, attributions and ideologies. Many of these specific causes of aggression are theoretically related to two underlying views of aggression and, through aggression, human behaviour more generally. These, essentially, are nature and nurture – the view that human behaviour is primarily determined by biologically determined causes (nature) or people's social and cultural experiences (nurture). It is important to understand that any one explanation of human behaviour is not invalidated by the presence of other explanations. This is true even when other explanations are plausible and supported by evidence. This is because human behaviour is affected by many causes, including those to be found under the umbrellas of nature and nurture, or personality and situation. It is also affected by interactions between these causes. However, when theories of human behaviour are built logically and insightfully, when they are tested well and the results are interpreted properly, you can begin to explain, predict and modify what people will *tend* to do with levels of confidence that are vastly superior to chance. Research suggests that people often misunderstand science and underestimate the uncertainty, imprecision and controversy inherent in science (Miller, 2001; Osborne, 2010; Spiegelhalter, 2017). This can cause them to dismiss scientific evidence, or see studies as unscientific (Rutjens, Heine, Sutton & van Harreveld, 2018). A moral of social psychology is therefore to *be realistic* about what any study or any theory can do, which is to provide partial and less than certain explanations. The aim of science is therefore to make progress; to accumulate evidence and refine theoretical understanding through time.

Social cognition is creative and motivated

Much of the early research in social cognition set out to show that human beings are prone to all sorts of mistakes (e.g., see the 'Heuristics and biases' section of Chapter 3). This programme uncovered many limitations in the way people process information. However, in recent years, researchers have demonstrated that people are capable of being more rational than these early studies suggested. Errors in attribution such as the 'fundamental attribution error' may reflect some degree of cognitive bias, but also reflect mistakes made by researchers, who did not

give participants enough information to make unbiased attributions (Chapter 3). It is also important to remember that people have many goals in life, only some of which involve being truthful and logical. People's ability to suspend, at least somewhat, truth or logic as their goals require means that they tend to believe what they want to believe. This basic principle of motivated social cognition is one of the core lessons of social psychology. In this book, we have seen how people use attention, inference and memory to preserve optimistic views of their personalities, control over life events and future prospects (Chapter 2), their intimate partners and relationships (Chapter 7), their social groups (Chapters 8 and 11), and the society in which they live (Chapter 14). Other relevant goals include finding people to blame, defending cherished worldviews, and staving off the fear of death (Chapter 4). It is increasingly clear that processes such as stereotyping do not simply reflect the need to take simplifying shortcuts in the face of limited time and cognitive resources. They also reflect myriad other needs, including constructing a positive image of the self and the ingroup, and justifying the inequalities of society (Chapter 11).

Reality is socially constructed

Although individuals are capable of much creativity in their interpretation of their world, they do not do this unaided. They inherit a vast reservoir of knowledge from their culture, in the form of what have been called 'social representations' (Moscovici, 1988). People not only passively adopt collective beliefs, but also actively collaborate to construct them (see Chapter 3). Beliefs, memories and decisions are formed collectively as well as individually (Mesoudi, Whiten & Laland, 2006; Smith & Collins, 2009). Norms and ideologies that provide a shared sense of what is right and wrong, such as political conservatism and liberalism, sexism and racism, wax, wane and mutate over time (Chapters 11 and 12). They change people's perceptions of what *is* so, as well as what *ought* to be so. People are not self-contained individuals; their beliefs, values and behaviour need to be understood in their social and cultural context (Pettigrew, 2018).

Social reality is self-perpetuating

The social psychological experiment is, at its heart, concerned with simple *A* causes *B* relationships, where independent variables have more or less immediate effects on dependent variables. But causal relationships in real life are much more complicated. Once a behavioural pattern, a thinking style or a set of relationships takes hold, it tends to perpetuate itself. Habits are one mechanism by which this happens. Habits of thought and decision carve neural pathways in our brains and hijack or bypass the deliberative mental processes (Amaya & Smith, 2018; O'Hare, Calakos & Yin, 2018; Verplanken, 2006) (see Chapter 4). Distrust (Brewer & Kramer, 1985), loneliness (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2014), aggression (Allen, Anderson & Bushman, 2018) and inequality (García-Sánchez, van der Toorn, Rodríguez-Bailón & Willis, 2018; Hackel & Zaki, 2018; Krupp & Cook, 2018; Sommet, Morselli & Spini, 2018) all create self-perpetuating cycles of thought, emotion and action. A social psychological experiment in which *A* causes *B* generally yields just a partial glimpse into a broader, more intricate causal process involving *A, B* and other variables – which often affect each other in loops as well as in straight lines (see Figure 15.1). This does not mean change is impossible, or that change cannot happen quickly. On the contrary, changes can be amplified through cycles of thought, emotion and action that might normally serve to hold stigmatization and disadvantage in place. For example, by intervening on university students' interpretations of negative experiences such as academic criticism and loneliness, it is possible to observe changes in behaviour (more seeking of social support, more academic effort) that in turn cause fewer negative experiences (Walton & Wilson, 2018). This changes a vicious cycle into a virtuous cycle.

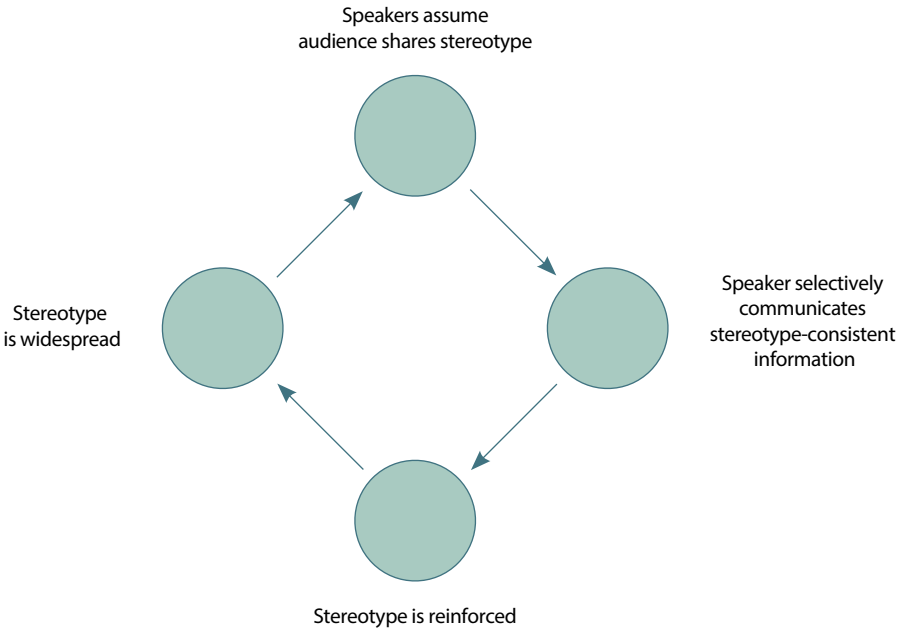

FIGURE 15.1 A positive feedback loop implied by work on serial communication People collaborate to build and reinforce social realities, and these social realities are self-perpetuating. Some research suggests that once a social stereotype has formed (e.g., football fans are uncultured), then communicators recognize that the people they are communicating with probably share that stereotype. They then select information that is consistent with that stereotype (e.g., a story about the mindless behaviour of a football fan) over information that contradicts it (e.g., a story about a sensitive and erudite poem written by a football fan). By selectively communicating this stereotype-consistent information, they reinforce the stereotype in their own and others' minds, and so on and so on (Clark & Kashima, 2007; Lyons & Kashima, 2003).

Identity and groups are central to who we are and how we behave

Although we are all individuals with our unique characteristics, thoughts, feelings and beliefs, the study of social psychology has another clear message: group memberships and social identities largely define who we are. This is another way in which social psychology punctures the individualistic assumptions of Western societies. We are members of groups in almost every facet of life, from our daily work (e.g., project teams, research groups) to our social lives (e.g., friends, sports groups). When we think and talk about ourselves, we refer to things like our gender, race and occupation and the important social identities that make us who we are. In turn, these social identities influence what we think and do. As we saw in Chapter 8, we are guided by explicit and implicit social norms that provide useful frames of reference from which to judge and recalibrate our own behaviour in social situations (Cialdini, Reno & Kallgren, 1990). We are also guided by social roles such as gender roles (e.g., Eagly & Steffen, 2000; Twenge, 2001) and status within groups and organizations – roles that often arise as a result of social comparisons with other group members (Festinger, 1954).

It is also clear from the study of social psychology that people need groups. For example, deviant group members who do not adhere to the norms and standards of the group are often disliked and derogated (Marques, Yzerbyt & Leyens, 1988). Also, as we know from the research on social exclusion (Chapter 8), being left out of groups – even groups we dislike – can have disastrous consequences for individuals' psychological wellbeing (Wesselmann & Williams, 2017). Finally, once in groups, people work together to solve problems and pursue goals that cannot be realized by any individual acting alone (Chapter 10).

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The power of the situation

People do not only act in line with their personal attitudes, values and traits. The 'power of the situation' (e.g., Benjamin & Simpson, 2009) was originally demonstrated by the classic studies of Solomon Asch, in which participants would proffer answers they must have known were false in order to conform to the opinions being voiced by other people. This tradition later saw Milgram's and Zimbardo's infamous studies in which (more or less) 'normal' individuals committed antisocial acts. Other lines of research also corroborate this central take-home message of social psychology: every time we conduct an experiment in social psychology, we document and exploit the power of the situation to reveal something about why people think, feel and act the way they do. Situational factors like physical fatigue (Chapters 2 and 3), the body language of the people we interact with (Chapters 4 and 5), standing on a wobbly bridge (Chapter 7), the film we have just watched or the game we have just played (Chapter 13), and thinking that we have just broken a camera (Chapter 14) can affect how racist, aggressive, kind, sexually attracted and sexually attractive we are.

Of course, situations do not arise independently of people. Social psychological experiments, like many human practices and institutions (think, for example, of road signs, schools, religious institutions, universities, and even parties) are designed by people, precisely to alter the way that people think, feel and act. Some people are affected differently than others by situations and do more to affect situations. Thus, as we saw in Chapter 9, a special kind of person is more likely to find a 'psychological study of prison life' an interesting and attractive way to spend a couple of weeks of their lives – and this kind of person is more likely to behave tyrannically in the situation. However, the fact that many situations are created by people, and that people respond differently to them, does not diminish the point that situations have profound effects on our behaviour.

Be conscious of the unconscious

People are aware of many of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, but lack the introspective awareness of many of the psychological processes that shape them (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Consider the results of an interesting study in environmental social psychology. When asked what kinds of messages would cause them to save energy in their homes, people thought they would be

most responsive to the message that saving energy will save them money. But when this message was displayed in people's homes, it did not influence their behaviour. The message that did cause householders to save energy was simply the information that their neighbours were doing so. Participants had earlier dismissed the idea that this social norm information would be enough to change their behaviour (Nolan, Schultz, Cialdini, Goldstein & Griskevicius, 2008). These studies suggest that the reasoning processes that affect people's behaviour occur without their awareness. Situations and social systems can alter the way people think, feel and behave in ways that escape their attention. People can be influenced by stimuli in the environment, and cues in other people's behaviour, that they may not even have consciously noticed (Chapter 3). Thus, it is not sufficient to ask people why they think, feel, and behave as they do: often, they simply cannot tell you, or will come up with a rationalization that might seem convincing but bears little relation to reality.

Our actions change us

Social psychological research suggests that our behaviours have the power to influence who we are and what we think. For example, as we saw in Chapter 4, the theory of cognitive dissonance suggests that when there is a discrepancy between beliefs and behaviours, something must change (Festinger, 1957; Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). Self-perception theory suggests that we infer our own attitudes from our behaviour. Thus, you are more likely to enjoy exercising if you make large sacrifices to do so, and you are more likely to adopt green attitudes if you recycle and save energy. Thus, social psychologists have conclusively demonstrated that beyond the commonsense understanding that our attitudes shape our behaviour, our behaviour changes our attitudes. Social psychologists have witnessed similar effects in communication, as we saw in Chapter 5. For example, the 'saying is believing' effect demonstrates that in articulating an argument for an audience, people's opinions change to become more in line with what they said to their audience, irrespective of what they originally thought (Echterhoff, Higgins & Levine, 2009; Echterhoff & Schmalbach, 2018; Hausmann, Levine & Higgins, 2008). For example, if we dislike a group, saying that we like them (for whatever reason) may subsequently cause us to change our minds about them, even if only a little. One implication of these findings is that you sometimes ought to 'do' what you want to be.

'Mind' and 'body' are not wholly separate

In the heyday of the cognitive revolution in psychology (Baars, 1986), and the development of computers in the years following the Second World War, the computer was adopted as a powerful metaphor for the human being. Like computers, humans had a short-term memory (analogous to random access memory), a long-term memory (analogous to information stored permanently on a disk or flash drive) and an executive system, like a central processing unit, that organized the whole system (e.g., Boden, 1998; Broadbent, 1987; Neisser, 1963). In this view, the fact that the computer runs on a physical platform of silicon and the human mind inhabits a brain made of water, fats and other chemicals hardly matters. This model of human nature was always controversial. Philosophers such as Koestler ([1967]1990) and Ryle (1949) argued that what we call the 'mind' cannot be sharply separated from the brain, and the entire body, in which it resides. Emotions and thoughts are based in bodily events. With the passing of time, research has increasingly revealed the social psychological importance of the body. To illustrate, we are more prone to impulsivity and stereotyping when blood sugar levels are low (Chapter 2), and the extent to which we like other people depends on the movements of our arms and facial muscles (Chapter 4). Although not conclusive, there is evidence that our attitudes, including our left-right political orientation, are partly hereditable, that is, influenced by genes (see Chapter 4). There is strong evidence that aggression levels are hereditable in other animals, which means that the same is likely to be true of human beings – a conclusion supported by studies of twins (Chapter 13). Different aspects of our brains are specialized for aspects of judging other people's traits, emotions and intentions

(Chapter 3). The presence of 'mirror neurons' has been demonstrated in human beings, which cause us to automatically engage in empathic mimicry of others (Chapter 5). Social psychologists cannot ignore the biological and bodily basis of behaviour. Research has suggested all kinds of interesting interactions between bodily, mental and social processes.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND YOU

We have described some of the main points of wisdom that arise from the study of social psychology. More generally, however, the study of social psychology has the potential to change you, as a person. It may even change you for the better, even if you are not aware of the changes. In this section, we outline some of the main skills and attributes you can acquire as you study social psychology. Specifically, we outline some of the transferable skills you will be able to take with you into your careers. More generally, we talk about career prospects for students of social psychology.

Critical thinking going forward

One of the major differences between social psychology as opposed to, say, cell division, organic chemistry or particle physics is that people with no training in the discipline have a rich array of knowledge, beliefs and investments in its subject matter. There are far fewer discussions in taxis and family gatherings about RNA, oxalic acid and gluons than there are about social influence (e.g., celebrity culture, peer pressure), intergroup processes (e.g., racism, gender roles), justice and relationships. All sorts of people have an opinion and are often prepared to voice them in strong and unqualified terms, despite their lack of professional or scientific expertise. Often, they are not even concerned about the truth of what they say, as has been revealed by recent studies of 'bullshit': statements made by people who are not deliberately lying but who do not care much about accuracy (Nilsson, Erlandsson & Västtfjäll, in press; Petrocelli, 2018).

In short, people think they know a lot about the things that social psychologists study; and, in many respects, they do. Years of personal experience, millennia of culture, and perhaps the biological inheritance of specific social skills and understandings equip us with a rich knowledge about minds, relationships and social systems that allow us to navigate through social life (Fletcher, 1995a, 1995b; Malle, 2005, 2008). This knowledge, however, has important limitations. As we have seen time and time again, people are often completely unaware of the situational forces and the psychological processes that influence them (Chapter 3). People overestimate the significance of personality variables and attitudes in shaping behaviour. They are surprisingly unable to predict their own emotional reactions to life events or the behaviour of others.

One of the reasons that laypeople's beliefs about people, relationships and society can be so limited and wrong is that their beliefs are motivated (see, e.g., Chapter 4's coverage of motivated social cognition). Similarly, whatever people believe privately, they may be motivated to make claims and persuade others to adopt a certain point of view – for political or financial reasons (Chapter 6). Regardless of whether they are sincere or not, people's claims are often inaccurate because they are not informed by research findings. Theories in the discipline of social psychology are informed and constrained by systematically obtained and evaluated evidence in ways that the theories of laypeople are not. As you know well by now, social psychological research has thrown up a lot of surprising findings. Recall Milgram's (1961) observation of striking levels of compliance with instructions to deliver apparently excruciating, dangerous and even lethal doses of electricity to an innocent stranger (Chapter 9). Roughly two-thirds of participants went all the way, flatly contradicting the intuition – even social scientists' intuition – that only a tiny minority of people would do this (Milgram, 1965). These results not only falsify specific intuitions about

what people would do in a particular experimental task. They also pose an immense challenge to popular notions about the power of individuals and of social norms to constrain evil, and, ultimately, the view that people who do exceptionally evil things must be exceptionally evil people.

Therefore, before accepting any claim about human behaviour, you should evaluate it carefully. Claims of fact, and explanations of fact, should be clear, unambiguous and testable. Before accepting them, you should consider whether they are supported by evidence and logic. These criteria are seldom met in everyday discussions about relationships, motivations, social problems or anything else impinging on social psychology. If you hold on to what you have learned in the study of this discipline, and recall some of the key messages of social psychology reviewed in this chapter, you are well equipped to be an informed sceptic, applying new levels of critical thinking skills to your everyday and professional life. Learning to think critically in one domain, such as social psychology, will help you think critically in all areas of your life (Sa, West & Stanovich, 1999).

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EXPLORING FURTHER

As part of your social psychology training, you will be invited to work on your critical thinking skills. You will learn to read research articles and book chapters, and critically evaluate the claims being made. As you read social psychology material, you will notice different styles of writing and different ways of making claims. For example, some sources report empirical findings and the authors make claims based on the objective data they have collected. Others write book chapters, which are partly based on research data while some of the claims are made from extrapolating from data and/or are formed from personal opinions and experiences. As a student of social psychology, it is important to be able to separate fact from interpretations, which can be subject to bias. To help you understand this process, read two to three different newspaper reports on the same topic (e.g., an event such as the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center or the result of the 2016 Brexit referendum in the UK). Identify the factual claims made in the articles. After you have done this, identify the claims that are based not on facts but on interpretation or personal opinion. What can you conclude from these articles? Are the articles significantly different from each other and which one do you believe holds the most weight? How do factors such as the credibility of the source also influence your judgement?

Psychological literacy

The study of social psychology equips the learner with what is known broadly as **psychological literacy**. According to McGovern et al. (2010), psychologically literate citizens are 'critical scientific thinkers and ethical and socially responsible participants in their communities' (p. 10). Thus, critical thinking is a key aspect of psychological literacy. Other aspects of psychological literacy are presented in Table 15.1 (see also Cranney & Dunn, 2011). Although we will not cover all these in this chapter, we will draw out some key examples and highlight their relevance to social psychology.

Psychological literacy A set of skills including critical thinking, ethics and social responsibility.

TABLE 15.1 Aspects of psychological literacy

Having a well-defined vocabulary and basic knowledge of the critical subject matter of psychology
Valuing the intellectual challenges required to use scientific thinking and the disciplined analysis of information to evaluate alternative courses of action
Taking a creative and amiable sceptic approach to problem solving
Applying psychological principles to personal, social and organizational issues in work, relationships and the broader community
Acting ethically
Being competent in using and evaluating information and technology
Communicating effectively in different modes and with many different audiences
Recognizing, understanding and fostering respect for diversity
Being insightful and reflective about one's own and others' behaviour and mental processes

Source: McGovern et al. (2010, p.11). Copyright © 2010 by American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission

Technological, research and statistical skills

Throughout your studies, you will most likely (if you have not already) become familiar with some more advanced IT skills. Your work will be produced via word processing and spreadsheets, much of your literature search will be conducted through academic search engines and databases, you may develop research materials using experimental (e.g., EPrime, Inquisit) or survey software platforms (e.g., Qualtrics, SurveyMonkey), and you may analyse data using statistical software packages (e.g., SPPS, R) and/or textual analysis software (NVivo, LIWC). You will learn to retrieve relevant information for your essays and reports and handle the information critically (see above). You will learn to solve complex problems. Furthermore, you will learn a wide range of data collection techniques, both qualitative and quantitative, as described in Chapter 1. You will learn to understand, analyse and present complex data effectively.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Social psychologists use a range of methods and data analytical techniques. The next time you read a social psychology paper, pay special attention to the research method they used and how they analysed their data. Could they have conducted their investigation differently?

Understanding diversity

Studying social psychology will equip you with a strong understanding of the issues raised by increasing social and cultural diversity in modern societies (Chapters 11 and 12). It will help you understand the processes that have shaped modern societies and the diversity

issues (e.g., immigration and multiculturalism) they are currently facing. It will equip you with a broad understanding of intergroup relations, which, in understanding diversity, involves studying what happens when people migrate from one place to another, how they adapt or acculturate, and how 'host' cultures are influenced by their presence. You will have a solid understanding of how inequality and prejudice work. Thus, the study of social psychology will give you a practical understanding of diversity issues as they exist where you live.

Connection between science and wider social and policy debates

Much of social psychology relates to real-life questions and problems. For example, how do we explain and reduce prejudice? Why do people deny the existence, causes and seriousness of climate change? In examining questions such as these that have wide implications for society, social psychologists have the opportunity to inform policy. Indeed, there are many cases where social psychological findings have directly informed public policy. For example, Carol Dweck's research on how children respond to feedback in educational settings (e.g., Kamins & Dweck, 1999) has brought about changes in the way children are taught to think about their own intelligence and abilities. Specifically, this work has helped practitioners understand what kinds of praise and criticism help students to stay motivated and focus on their learning. Her set of interventions – the 'Mindset Works' tools – have been implemented widely across the USA in an effort to promote children's motivation and achievement (see the Social Psychology in the Real World box in Chapter 1). Social psychological research is, and should be, unforgiving in its scrutiny, however, and has recently suggested that these manipulations may have little or no effect for most students – though importantly they may specifically help disadvantaged students (Sisk, Burgoyne, Sun, Butler & Macnamara, 2018). Furthermore, in 2007 a team of UK and European social psychologists led by Greg Maio worked with the UK government to tackle obesity and inform interventions for people to make lifestyle changes (Maio, Haddock & Jarman, 2007). These are only two examples of the many ways that social psychologists contribute their expertise to important social issues.

EXPLORING FURTHER

Research 'impact' is becoming increasingly important in academia. Governments, who typically fund academic research, need to know that their funds are being used for research that makes a difference in some way. This is not to say that non-applied (basic) research has less value. Indeed, the insights gained from basic social psychological research continue to increase our knowledge of many facets of human social processes. This is called 'academic impact'. However, social psychology can make a difference to society in many other ways too. Consider, for example, the remit of the Behavioural Insights Team, which is to 'find intelligent ways to encourage, support and enable people to make better choices for themselves' (Cabinet Office, 2012, p. 3). The idea behind the initiative is to bring about significant changes in society (e.g., increased organ donation, environmental consciousness and healthier eating) by applying insights from behavioural science – and to a large extent social psychology – to influence people's behaviour in inexpensive and non-coercive ways. The initiative is influenced by 'nudge theory' (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) which builds on several of the central insights of social psychological research, arguing that small interventions or 'nudges' might elicit the kinds of behavioural changes that governments have been struggling to achieve. Take a look at some of the activities of the Behavioural Insights Team. What examples can you see of social psychological theories and research having an impact?

Social psychological findings are also frequently reported in the media and contribute to debates about prominent social issues. If you conduct an Internet search on the names of prominent social psychologists, it is very likely that you will come across media reports highlighting and debating their findings. For example, several social psychologists have commented on the UK riots in 2011, talking about topics such as crowd behaviour, aggression and gang violence (Reicher & Stott, 2011; Stott et al., 2018; Stott, Drury & Reicher, 2016). Others have contributed to the public debate on climate change, and social psychologists frequently offer their expertise on public debates related to prejudice and persuasion and other topics such as domestic violence. A great deal of social psychological research deals with issues that are relevant to people's everyday lives and so it has great potential to engage the public with science and scientific findings (Figure 15.2).

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FIGURE 15.2 Media reporting of social psychologists' research Social psychologists deal with a range of topical subjects and, as such, their research is frequently reported in the media.

Communication skills

Studying social psychology provides students with an opportunity to develop communication skills. Effective communication involves developing a clear, logical argument that is supported by relevant evidence and written in an appropriate style for its audience. Throughout your degree, you will have the opportunity to develop these skills through experiences such as making oral presentations to groups. However, for the most part, social psychology work involves writing. Your studies will therefore enable you to develop your written communication skills. By the end of your degree, you should be able to present an argument effectively. Of course, some people write more fluently than others, but if you write carefully and deliberately, the quality of your ideas should be evident. Write simply and to the best of your ability, drafting your work in advance. When writing, use empathy – try to see things from your reader's perspective. Consider who your audience is and what does, and does not, need to be explained to them. Crucially, always write to the brief – carefully read and listen to any instructions on written assignments you are given. Read the assignment carefully and ensure you are answering the question that has been set. Respect the due dates, word lengths, and formatting and submission requirements absolutely. If some instruction by your tutor seems to contradict anything we have written here, follow your tutor's instruction.

Of interest, social psychologist Michael Billig (2011) has identified several pitfalls that are encountered in social psychological writing. In particular, he critiques writing in social psychological journals and by undergraduates alike. He offers the following advice:

1. Try to use simple language and to avoid technical terms as much as possible. Sometimes, technical terms are not as clear as the ordinary ones and it is often more difficult to write without jargon. But it is much easier to read writing that is free of (unnecessary) jargon. Interestingly, Billig recommends that we should not become 'personally attached to technical terms' (p. 18). As instructors, we often find that students overuse technical language in their essays. Instructors understand the pressure students feel to demonstrate that they have mastered technical terms. However, we are generally much more impressed by clear writing, sound logic, good use of evidence and critical thinking than we are by the use of terminology. We feed back to students that they overused terminology and elevated language more often than we comment that their language was too simple and did not employ enough terminology.
2. Avoid writing in passive sentences where possible. Writing 'It was found … (Manning et al., 2007)' is much less clear and efficient than writing 'Manning et al. (2007) found …'.
3. Treat these recommendations as aspirations rather than rigid rules. Sometimes, at a key point in your work, it may be necessary to break one of these rules. There may be an area of literature that is so riddled with terminology, for example, that it is all but impossible to avoid it. Still, you should avoid producing long tracts of writing that break these rules.

Billig (2011) highlights a couple of adjacent sentences from a recent article to illustrate his points. The first sentence reads:

> Whereas intergroup anxiety is by now an established mediator of intergroup contact and cross-group friendship, the present study also sought to explore cognitions of rejection as a cognitive mediator predicted by cross-group friendship, and predictive of intergroup anxiety, as well as a range of attitudes towards the outgroup (p. 14).

This is the second sentence:

> Specifically, we propose that people with cross-group friends cease to expect outgroup members to reject their attempts at contact and friendship.

The second sentence is not only shorter and crisper but is also written, as Billig (2011) puts it, 'in terms of people and what they might do and feel' (p. 14). It is relatively free of jargon, and is much clearer in its use of active voice, clearly establishing who is doing what. Mastering the art of simple, accurate writing will allow you to communicate complex ideas to a range of audiences, and is a valuable skill, no matter what career you choose.

Research projects

As an undergraduate student in psychology, you will probably be required to undertake a research project as part of your degree. At the end of this book, we have highlighted some projects that students have done over the course of their studies, comprising a range of projects across social psychology. We hope that this makes the prospect of conducting your own research less daunting. All these students – just like you – had to start somewhere. Here, we would like to offer some small pieces of advice in conducting your own undergraduate projects. Also, in the Further Reading section, we have cited a book that may help you with your project.

First, it is advisable to be realistic about the amount of work you can achieve in your project. Some of you will be required to work for a year on a project. Some will have more time and some will have less time. Some students will be permitted to work with other students and others will be required to work alone. Be mindful of the requirements of your specific

institution and, when in doubt, take the advice of your supervisor. In meetings with your supervisor, be professional, punctual and polite. Likewise, observe professional standards when dealing with research participants. Do not attempt to influence your participants. It is crucial that you adhere to the ethical guidelines of your institution or professional association (e.g., British Psychological Society). Be scrupulous and thorough in this respect (see Chapter 1).

When deciding on a topic and designing your research, apply critical reasoning skills and spend a good amount of time researching the relevant literature. We strongly advise that you aim to be incremental; that is, look for one new piece of knowledge in your research rather than trying to invent a whole new research area for yourself. Novelty is key, but do not leave yourself stranded in an entirely new research area with no literature from which to draw upon. Likewise, you should introduce methodological innovation only where necessary. This means using manipulations and measures devised by other researchers where possible. This will save time and avoid mistakes, and you will find it easier to interpret your findings if you adapt others' procedures and materials.

Very often, supervisors may suggest a project to you, or your institution may invite you to conduct a defined project, rather than something that you come up with entirely by yourself. All of the above points apply in this case – take ownership of the work, make sure you understand the research project fully and if there is scope, look out for pitfalls and enhancements that you might be able to suggest to your supervisor. Look out for opportunities to add value to the research, perhaps by accessing participants or adding a measure that will be especially valuable. However the idea for the project has arisen, it is important that you plan your time carefully to avoid any pitfalls associated with conducting research. It is also important that you design your project mindful of how you plan to analyse the results.

Having given all these words of caution, it is important that you also be curious and open-minded. Typically, marks on project work are awarded according to the quality of your research, your professionalism in running it and the quality of your write-up, not your results. So, do not be disappointed if your project produces non-significant findings. This is very common for student projects and does not mean that you will receive a low mark.

EXPLORING FURTHER

It is never too early to start thinking about your research project. Conducting an undergraduate project is an opportunity for you to conduct a unique investigation into a topic that interests you. Now that you have a broad knowledge of social psychology, perhaps have a go at generating some ideas for a research project. The first step is to think of a general topic. To do this, take some time to list the topics in social psychology that interest you the most. Then, narrow this down to a specific research area. For example, if you are interested in prejudice, what type of prejudice is most interesting to you (e.g., race, gender, sexuality)? Are you interested in understanding prejudice or reducing prejudice? Once you have got this far, it is time to think of some potential questions you might ask. Do you notice any gaps in the literature? For example, what can social psychological research tell us about reducing prejudice and what can it not tell us yet? This is where you begin to generate your unique research question. The steps that follow involve deciding on what you will do, what you will predict, and what you will be able to conclude based on your investigation. This may seem a daunting task but broken down into a series of smaller steps, it need not be a scary process. Again, this is a unique opportunity for you to make your mark on a research topic, so enjoy it. For other information and advice on conducting your research project, do read the student projects at the end of the book.

Careers and employability

It is widely known that many psychology graduates do not seek employment as professional psychologists. For example, in Australia, the three most commonly reported careers are (in order): legal, social and welfare professions; professionals in business, including management, human resources and marketing; and support workers in the health and social services sectors (including mental health: see Graduate Careers Australia, 2015; Hamilton et al., 2018). In the UK, about a third go into business and commerce, a third into the public sector, and others engage in varied careers including teaching (Quality Assurance Agency, 2016). Of course, professional bodies in many countries, such as the British Psychological Society, need to ensure that degrees adhere to the topics and standards that would allow graduates to ultimately become professional psychologists. However, the Quality Assurance Agency psychology benchmark in the UK stresses that:

> due to the wide range of generic skills, and the rigour with which they are taught, training in psychology is an excellent foundation that supports entry into a broad range of careers. In addition to subject skills and knowledge, graduates also develop skills in communication, numeracy, teamwork, critical thinking, computing, independent learning and many others, all of which are highly valued by employers. (QAA, 2016, p. 6)

Whether you are planning a career in psychology or elsewhere, or whether you are not consciously planning one, it is worth reflecting on the skills and attributes that will help open doors for you later in life. Landrum and Harrold (2003) report that employers of psychology graduates rated the following attributes as most important (1 = most important):

1. listening skills
2. teamwork skills
3. ability to get along with others
4. wanting and being able to learn
5. in particular, being willing to learn new and important skills
6. having a focus on customers or clients
7. strong interpersonal relationship skills
8. being adaptable to changing situations
9. having the ability to suggest solutions to problems
10. being able to implement solutions to problems.

TIME TO REFLECT

Think about Landrum and Harrold's (2003) list of attributes desired by employers and the key points of psychological literacy we identified earlier in the chapter. How do these relate to each other?

Obtaining a university degree does not guarantee that you will have the attributes that will set you up in a career. Employers in the USA took a rather dim view of university graduates, according to one survey (AAC&U, cited in Trapp et al., 2011). Specifically, employers rated:

- 33 per cent of graduates as having insufficient skills and knowledge to succeed in relatively basic or 'entry-level' positions
- 42 per cent as lacking self-direction
- 37 per cent as having poor writing skills

- 31 per cent as lacking critical thinking skills
- 30 per cent as lacking adaptability
- 26 per cent as lacking the ability to accurately appraise their strengths and weaknesses.

It is useful to consider this list of concerns together with Landrum and Harrold's list of qualities that employers are looking for in psychology graduates. Looking at these two lists, you can develop a clear picture of the qualities you might want to develop in the course of your studies. Critical thinking, initiative and social skills, including the ability to communicate effectively in different ways to different audiences, are crucial. How can you develop these skills? Some methods are very traditional. Attend available classes, listen to lectures in order to develop your ability to listen to others and to speak effectively. Take available opportunities to work in teams, and do so with enthusiasm and diplomacy. Be critical and curious. Read widely, both to increase your knowledge and also to enhance your writing skills. The more you encounter how others express complex psychological concepts in writing, the easier you will find it to do the same.

And importantly, learn these skills by *doing* things. Take part in research. Take opportunities to participate in student societies and to assist in research or teaching projects, perhaps representing your student body or academic department on committees or at public events. Doing things to solve problems, to help others, adapting to situations and adapting situations to your needs are essential to professional life. A longitudinal qualitative investigation of psychology graduates' transitions into a variety of careers indicated that students were helped by seeing themselves as professionals (Reddy & Shaw, 2019). This means that, hopefully, your studies will frequently be inspiring, exciting and enjoyable, and to some extent we suggest that you should also see them as your job. A degree in psychology – of which social psychology plays a crucial part – gives students the opportunity to develop a range of skills that will equip them to succeed in a broad variety of careers.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have invited you to reflect on everything you have learned throughout reading this book. What are the key insights of social psychology? What concepts, skills and ideas can you take forward into your careers? We argued that there are several take-home principles or messages of social psychology:

- Despite much popular thinking, social psychology can be studied scientifically.
- Scientific explanations are incomplete and imperfect. Any one explanation of human behaviour is not invalidated by the presence of other explanations.
- People need groups – group memberships and social identities largely define who we are.
- People are not easily manipulated. They often react strongly to attempts to change their opinions and influence their behaviours. They are creative and reactive.
- People are not always aware of factors that will influence them. Also, they cannot always tell when they have been influenced.
- Behaviour is crucial. Not only is it the central means by which we can understand human nature, it also has the power to change what we think and who we are.
- Critical thinking is key. Before accepting any claim about human behaviour, evaluate it carefully. Claims of fact, and explanations of fact, should be clear, unambiguous and testable.

In the final section, we discussed some of the skills you will take forward with you from your study of social psychology, such as psychological literacy, technological, research and statistical skills, an understanding of diversity, the connection between science and wider social policy debates, and communication skills. We discussed how to use these skills in your student projects and in your future careers. Now that you have reached the end of this book, we wish you all the very best in these future adventures.

FURTHER READING

Bartels, J.M., & Herman, W.E. (2018). *Revisiting Psychology: A student's guide to critical thought*. London: Red Globe Press. This book presents reviews of 12 important psychological studies, including studies from social psychology. There are critical thinking exercises and questions to help students evaluate these studies and to strengthen their analytical and critical thinking skills.

British Journal of Social Psychology, September 2011, Vol. 50, celebrating the BJSP's 50th anniversary. Edited by Jolanda Jetten and John Dixon, this special issue contains articles from some of the foremost contributors to this leading journal. It surveys developments in the field of social psychology, particularly as it has been done in Europe, the UK and the Commonwealth over the past 50 years. We do not agree with everything the contributors have to say, but all the articles are impassioned, insightful and thought-provoking.

Carson, S., Fama, J., Clancy, K., Ebert, J., & Tierney, A. (2012). *Writing for psychology: A guide for psychology concentrators*. Harvard University. Retrieved from https://writingproject.fas.harvard.edu/files/hwp/files/writing_for_psych_final_from_printer.pdf. This guide takes you through principles of critical evaluation and writing technique in psychology, and although written with Harvard students in mind, is free to access for all – and highly recommended.

McGarty, C., & Haslam, S.A. (Eds.). (1997). *The message of social psychology: Perspectives on mind in society*. London: Blackwell. Although compiled in 1997, this remains a unique and insightful collection of perspectives on the principal lessons to be learned from the study of social psychology. Twenty-five eminent social psychologists share their views on the message of social psychology and the practice of conducting social psychological research.

Smith, J.R., & Haslam, S.A. (Eds.). (2017). *Social psychology: Revisitng the classic studies* (2nd ed). London: Sage. Smith and Haslam have assembled a group of leading social psychologists to 'rediscover' some of the classic studies in social psychology discussed throughout this book. It will encourage you to think critically about the findings and carefully reflect on the conclusions that were drawn.

STUDENT PROJECTS

1. *Not as stereotypical as you think: Interprofessional group development in problem-based learning* by Alexandra Björnstjerna Hjelm, Linköping University, Sweden 645
2. *Internalized monosexism and bisexual identity disclosure by women on Tinder* by Amelia Henry, Western Sydney University, Australia 648
3. *Computational explorations of online group identities* by Amos Fong, University of Cambridge, UK 651
4. *Would you let this person into a bar? Perceptions of aggression* by Geneviv Fanous, University of New South Wales, Australia 654
5. *'Too halal for haram people and too haram for halal people': An IPA study on the lived identity of young British Muslim women* by Megan Hunt, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK 656
6. *How do images in the media influence women's attitudes towards their appearance?* by Mollie Dale, Aberystwyth University, UK 659
7. *Can we get more active in the workplace? Standing in meetings* by Molly Rasch, University College London, UK 661
8. *Sexism and life satisfaction in intimate relationships* by Nina Waddell, University of Auckland, New Zealand 664
9. *The effect of speciesism and personalization on perceptions of dog and pig victims* by Sarah Gradidge, Anglia Ruskin University, UK 667
10. *Are feminists conspiring against us? The relationship between endorsement of conspiracy theories and rape myths* by Tanya Schrader, Staffordshire University, UK 670

NOT AS STEREOTYPICAL AS YOU THINK: INTERPROFESSIONAL GROUP DEVELOPMENT IN PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

Alexandra Björnstjerna Hjelm studied as a Masters student at Linköping University, Sweden, supervised by Associate Professor Eva Hammar Chiriac. Alexandra's research project examined interprofessional education (IPE) in healthcare, which involves students from different healthcare professions learning together during their professional training. Alexandra was interested in the group processes that arise when people from different professions are brought together, and their implications for healthcare more broadly.

MY TOPIC AND AIMS

In my work as a TV journalist, I have seen first-hand the importance of interprofessional cooperation in healthcare. I have met a number of people who depend on it in order to benefit from effective and safe care that allows them to lead a dignified and normal life. One of those people is seven-year-old Eric who has Costello syndrome, a rare genetic disorder. He typically visits a hospital up to 30 times a year and can find himself treated by 10 different specialists. It means a lot to Erik when different health professionals work together to streamline his healthcare: for example, dental treatment can be carried out while he is anaesthetized for another treatment.

The importance of interprofessional cooperation is also emphasized by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2010). According to this framework, IPE is crucial for future effective and safe patient care. I had the opportunity to participate in an ongoing research project studying medical students who, for part of their course, work in an interprofessional group with students from other medical programmes. The purpose of my study was to explore and enhance knowledge of interprofessional tutorial group development in problem-based learning (PBL) (Dahlgren, 2009), a pedagogical approach in which students are supposed to learn how to work in groups, as much as they learn subject content.

MY METHODS

I was interested to find out how different behaviours manifest in tutorial groups using PBL. I chose observation as a method because it means that my conclusions can be built on events that occur in actual, real-time interactions. Observations were made based on data extracted from video recordings filmed during a six-week course attended by IPE students training to become physicians, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech therapists. Four tutorial groups, each consisting of six to nine students and one tutor, were included in

the study. During the course, the initial and final group meetings, each lasting two hours, were recorded. The focus was on the beginning, the middle and the end of each meeting to obtain a longitudinal spread over time and provide as accurate a picture of group behaviour and development as possible.

Spin Theory, operationalized with SPGR (Systematization Person Group Relations) (Sjøvold, 2008), is a model used to explore group processes that is based on the 'Big Four', used in most theories of group development. The four basic elements are called functions. The *control* function enables the group to allocate tasks in analytical task-solving, the *nurture* function keeps the group together as a social system, the *opposition* function allows members to speak up and the *loyalty* function promotes disciplined teamwork. The functions need to be balanced to produce an effective, mature group that is capable of rapidly changing between behaviours that support the different functions.

I systematically observed and categorized behaviours in tutorial groups. SPGR has a schedule of 12 behavioural categories which can be used for this categorization. For example, one behaviour is 'task-oriented', where the person is objective, efficient, analytical, adheres to the task and has a neutral, if slightly formal, body language; the opposite behaviour is 'nurturing', where the person is caring, empathetic, thoughtful, sociable, protective, compassionate, with an open facial expression and body language. This information was then entered into a computer program, 'the SPGR observer v 1.2', that also carried out the analysis and produced field charts.

MY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results showed that, both in the initial and final group meetings, the interprofessional tutorial groups were focused on task- and work-oriented behaviours. However, the four groups developed differently: in Spin Theory terms, two of the tutorial groups matured and two remained immature. The tutorial groups that matured went from being more scattered at the initial group meeting to being more cohesive and synergistic at the last group meeting. The tutorial groups that did not mature were divided at both the initial and last group meetings. The groups that matured may have found it easier to handle the tasks than the immature groups with less cooperation, but, in order to be able to say why the groups develop differently, further research is needed.

STOCKBYTE

Previous research shows that being locked in stereotypical professional behaviours leads to less effective care (Bell & Allain, 2011). For example, stereotypical behaviours such as loyalty and subordination in nurses can lead them to withdraw when faced with dominant doctors. Therefore their full skill sets might not be used. In all the tutorial groups included in my study, students showed that they were not locked into stereotyped behaviours associated with the professions for which they were training. For example, nursing students changed behaviours during the six-week course from more stereotypical behaviours, such as loyalty and subordination, leading to withdrawal, to more flexible behaviours leading to synergy. This flexibility is positive for developing effective collaboration later when they are working in their professions.

MY JOURNEY

Together with a group of researchers at Linköping University, Sweden and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, I am now writing an article based on my study for international publication. Since the beginning of my education when I participated in an

observation study of how people behave when they pass a beggar sitting outside a shop, I've longed to develop my ability to observe. As a journalist, I primarily work with what people say, but what we say and what we do can be two very different things. In future research projects I want to combine data gathering methods that measure both. I have also learned how difficult it is to observe and the training it requires. Unfortunately, observation is a costly method and it takes a lot of time. However, Norwegian researchers are developing a sensor that can be worn to record behaviours and it would be interesting to work with sensors in a future project. At the moment, I am writing my Masters thesis and have really benefited from this project. I have a better idea of how important planning is, and also a little less performance anxiety.

MY ADVICE

I think it is important to set up milestones for your work and celebrate when you reach them. Don't be afraid to ask qualified people for help and don't compare yourself with others – just concentrate on yourself and your own progress. Finally, be persistent.

INTERNALIZED MONOSEXISM AND BISEXUAL IDENTITY DISCLOSURE BY WOMEN ON TINDER

Amelia Henry studied as an undergraduate student, and then as a Masters student at Western Sydney University, Australia, supervised by Professor Craig McGarty and Dr Ana-Maria Bliuc. Her research investigated the role of monosexism – the belief that people can only be heterosexual or homosexual – and the internalization of this belief, in the formation of bisexual identity and subsequent disclosure to potential romantic partners, particularly in the digital dating environment.

MY TOPIC AND AIMS

I wanted to investigate how disclosure could be made a simpler, more fulfilling and less terrifying task for people with non-heterosexual identities. I was especially interested in the role that the online world could potentially play in this process. Based on my reading, I found that while general sexual identity disclosure patterns had received much empirical and theoretical attention, disclosure to potential romantic partners had not. This seemed particularly relevant to people with bisexual identities whose sexual identity is usually assumed based on the gender of their current or previous partner.

Previous research had conceptualized disclosure as a final point to a positive sexual identity and it became clear that such conceptualizations may not be applicable to bisexual people who have reported often having to reinforce or re-disclose their sexual identity, even to their romantic partners, due to dichotomous categorizations of sexuality grounded in monosexism. Accordingly, it did not surprise me that bisexual people have also been shown to face ongoing sexual identity uncertainty even after they self-identify as bisexual, which had been theorized to be due to the internalization of monosexist beliefs. I decided to examine the role that internalized monosexism may play in both positive and negative aspects of bisexual identity, and how this subsequently impacts disclosing a bisexual identity to potential romantic partners on the popular dating app, Tinder.

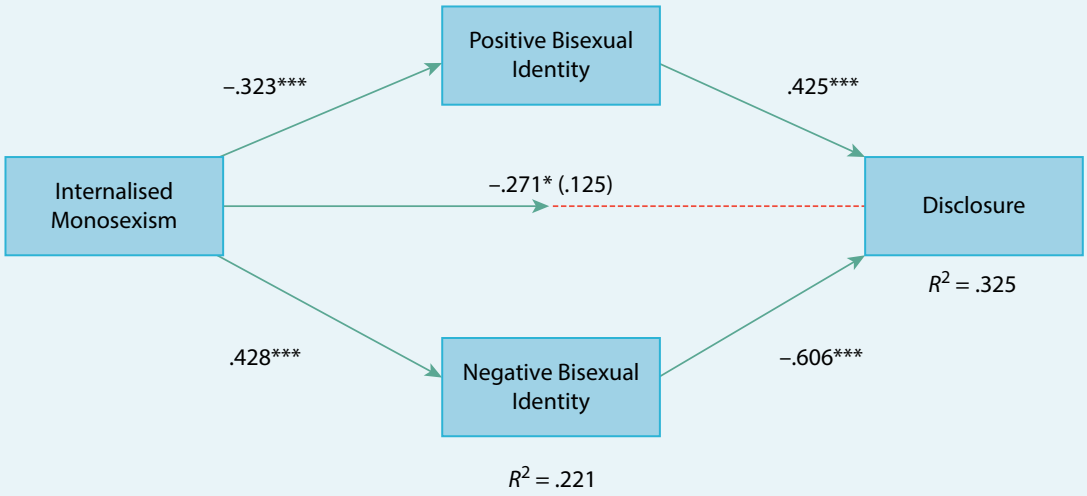
MY METHODS

As my initial aim was to identify how disclosure could become a more achievable task, I chose to test a model predicting the likelihood of bisexual identity disclosure based on the previous research I had reviewed. I chose to examine this in relation to bisexual women, who have historically been told they were in denial about their true sexuality when disclosing their bisexual identity. The study involved an anonymous, online, between-groups experimental design, where participants in the experimental group were asked to challenge monosexist ideology by viewing a monosexist statement and providing three reasons why it may not be true, while the control group completed the same task in relation to an irrelevant statement, before all participants

completed measures of internalized monosexism. If internalized monosexism did impact bisexual identity and subsequent disclosure, I wanted to see if rejecting monosexism could increase the likeliness of disclosure. Following the experimental condition, all participants therefore completed measures of bisexual identity, disclosure and demographic information.

MY FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

I predicted that those who challenged monosexism would report less internalized monosexism than those in the control group. I also predicted that this result would lead to higher levels of positive bisexual identity and a subsequent likelihood of disclosing than those in the control condition. My results showed that the experimental manipulation was unsuccessful – perhaps because internalized monosexism was very low across the sample. However, my hypotheses were partially supported. Firstly, the results of a mediation analysis, which can be seen in Figure 1, showed that internalized monosexism did predict disclosure decisions – meaning that lower levels of internalized monosexism increased the likelihood of disclosing bisexual identity to their potential romantic partners. This claim had previously been untested, so my study provided the first empirical evidence for it.



Total Indirect Effect (b = –.397, 95% CI [–.59, –.23], β = –.301)
Indirect Effect through Positive Identity (b = –.137, 95% CI [–.24, –.05], β = –.104)
Indirect Effect through Negative Identity (b= –.260, 95% CI [–.44, –.12], β= –.197)

FIGURE 1 Path model of direct and indirect associations between internalized monosexism and disclosure intentions as mediated by positive and negative bisexual identity Values are reflective of standardized regression coefficients. Direct path is shown in parentheses.

The second finding, and of particular interest, was that the effect of internalized monosexism on disclosure was more strongly mediated by negative bisexual identity than by positive bisexual identity. This suggests that bisexual women are more negatively impacted by stronger threats to their identity, than they are positively impacted by minimal threats to their identity. Since negative identity dimensions relate to negative evaluations of oneself in relation to sexual identity, and since such evaluations are linked to the internalization of monosexist ideologies, my results suggest that internalized monosexism may act as a strong disincentive for bisexuals to disclose their identity. The third finding supported this interpretation: intentions to disclose were more strongly associated with negative bisexual identity than positive bisexual identity.

Lastly, there were no significant differences between general disclosures and those on Tinder, which supports previous research demonstrating that disclosure to potential romantic partners may undergo the same psychological processes in offline and online contexts.

MY JOURNEY

The main thing that I learned throughout this degree was definitely perseverance. No matter how tired or unmotivated I felt, I somehow managed to get up and do the work. Because of this, I finished my MRes with a High Distinction at the time of my expected completion date and I've been awarded a full scholarship position on the PhD programme at Western Sydney University. While my results were interesting to me, they also encouraged me to continue pursuing this area of research. For instance, I want to investigate strategies for bisexual women to overcome barriers associated with internalized monosexism, as well as other aspects of their identity.

MY ADVICE

When I made the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate study, the hardest thing was the lack of structure. My advice would be to plan everything. Set yourself mini due-dates and try to stick to them. If you aren't meeting your self-appointed deadlines, then make new ones. Treat each part of your project like a singular task and it won't seem so large. Back-up all your work constantly. Don't compare your topic, methods, or research findings to anyone else's – it's your project for a reason.

COMPUTATIONAL EXPLORATIONS OF ONLINE GROUP IDENTITIES

Amos Fong studied as a Psychological and Behavioural Sciences undergraduate student at the University of Cambridge working under the supervision of Dr Sander van der Linden. His work involves using the wealth of information generated by social media to explore group characteristics and interactions.

MY TOPIC AND AIMS

Social media has changed society's informational landscape, where users and online platforms filter information according to pre-existing beliefs, giving rise to homogeneous and polarized online communities (Barberá, Jost, Nagler, Tucker & Bonneau, 2015; Bessi et al., 2016; Del Vicario et al., 2016; Del Vicario, Scala, Caldarelli, Stanley & Quattrociocchi 2017; Zollo et al., 2017). My project aimed to investigate if exposure to distinct informational narratives is reflected in different linguistic features of online communities, along with the extent to which language use might relate to psychological themes and yield insights into how groups communicate. To limit my project's scope, I focused on two groups with distinct but contrary narratives – conspiracy theorists and the popular science community.

To date, survey-based studies represent most research into how exposure to differing informational narratives affects people's beliefs and social behaviour. Exploring this question through public user-generated content on social networks was therefore interesting to me, as it allowed me to tap into real-world conversations on a scale beyond more traditional approaches. Amidst the growing climate of science denial and fake news, the ways in which online conspiracy groups make use of language also remains understudied. I hoped that my project would contribute in some way to a growing body of research exploring the psychological correlates of 'conspiratorial worldviews' and the wider proliferation of misinformation in an increasingly online world.

MY METHODS

I referred to online rankings and indicators of popularity of vocal UK/US-based conspiracy theorists and popular science figures who are active on Twitter, resulting in a list of five prominent individuals or *influencers* for each group. Using the Twitter Application Programming Interface, the 'rtweets' R package as detailed in Kearney (2017), and the 'twtools' R package described in Murphy (2017), their recent tweets were collected over a span of five days; tweets were also collected from the public timelines of a non-overlapping sample of followers (n = 1,656). This resulted in over 16,000 influencer and 160,000 follower tweets, and the data was subsequently cleaned and anonymized.

The tweets of these two groups were analysed and compared using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) tool (Pennebaker, Chung, Ireland, Gonzales & Booth, 2007). For given text inputs, the LIWC returns 'scores' for words falling into linguistic categories such as pronouns and adverbs, along with variety of affective, cognitive and perceptual psychological processes. Additionally, for each group I obtained 100 words with the highest term frequency-inverse document frequency (or tf-idf) values – an indicator of a word's importance in a document in a corpus. I then measured between-group differences in scores for relevant LIWC categories, along with the profiles of word use as indicated by tf-idf values.

MY FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

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I found that conspiracy theorists and their followers displayed more negatively charged emotions in their tweets compared to the popular science sample. They were also more likely to use words related to themes such as death, religion and authority. Additionally, followers of conspiracy theorists showed a greater use of language relating to certainty and social outgroups in their tweets, along with more swear words. The tf-idf results also provided qualitative support to the idea of conspiracists using more negatively skewed language.

The results echo earlier findings linking conspiracy ideation to negative sentiment, hostility and distrust of authority, and how the need for cognitive closure correlates positively with belief in conspiracy theories (Abalakina-Paap, Stephan, Craig & Gregory, 1999; Grzesiak-Feldman, 2013, 2015; Marchlewska, Cichocka & Kossowska, 2017). However, a counterintuitive finding was that conspiracy influencers used less certainty-related language than their science counterparts and conspiracy followers. This might reflect differences in how the creators and receivers of conspiratorial content convey information. However, as with many things in psychology, further investigation is required to test this hypothesis. More importantly, this project provides an alternative approach in exploring between-group differences in language use, which in turn correlates with exposure to, and engagement with, different forms of informational content.

MY JOURNEY

After graduating, I worked as a research intern at Nokia's Bell Labs, exploring changes in emotional sentiment around public events in US and UK cities, as measured from geo-referenced social media data. The experience of working with massive datasets while collaborating with computer scientists and social psychologists impressed upon me the potential of social media (and big data) analytics to explore and address issues facing society today. Following this internship, I will be exploring similar opportunities back in Asia – though further study in Social Data Science is something I am actively considering.

By undertaking such projects, I learned about the rewards and challenges of doing research – from formulating a testable hypothesis to drafting an academic paper. It was also exciting to consider the potential of using social media scraping tools in psychological research, along with developing the computational skills to work with them. My findings formed part of a presentation by my supervisor at an academic conference and has been written into a paper for publication.

MY ADVICE

When coming up with a topic for your research project, it is normal to want to break new ground and answer the Big Questions in psychology. While that is perfectly fine, remember that novel findings can also come from looking at smaller, previously explored areas from different perspectives or by using new tools. Talk to researchers and read up on the latest developments in your area of interest – do not be afraid to ask for guidance and to take inspiration from their research questions and methods.

WOULD YOU LET THIS PERSON INTO A BAR? PERCEPTIONS OF AGGRESSION

Geneviv Fanous studied a Master of Psychology (Clinical) at the University of New South Wales, Australia, and her thesis was supervised by Professor Tom Denson. Her work focused on the way in which certain cues influence perceptions of aggressivity in bar settings.

MY TOPIC AND AIMS

Alcohol is implicated in the majority of violent assaults in Australia. However, consuming alcohol by itself doesn't spontaneously elicit aggression. Instead, alcohol facilitates aggression to a greater extent among individuals who possess an innate tendency to behave aggressively in certain situations. In the context of bars, developing a way to identify individuals with this tendency to aggress could be critical to reducing violence. Therefore, the focus of my project was to (1) identify cues that people might use to detect aggression in patrons before they enter a bar or pub, and (2) assess the impact that these cues have on our innate ability to detect aggression in unfamiliar others. This was based on past research which suggested that human beings are able to accurately judge another person's aggressivity by only viewing their face (Geniole, Denson, Dixson, Carré & McCormick, 2015).

MY METHODS

The first stage of the project involved conducting pilot interviews with security personnel to determine the types of cues that they typically utilized to judge a patron's likelihood of aggression. The interviews yielded five main themes: signs of alcohol and drug use, interaction with the security guard, body tenseness (e.g., clenched fist), appearance (e.g., presence of hand and neck tattoo) and race/ethnicity.

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The primary study assessed the effect of these cues on our innate ability to detect aggression. Participants viewed an image of a man's face with an accompanying written description. The descriptions incorporated one of the following seven cues, which were derived from the pilot interview: Middle Eastern appearance, tattoos, searching for the security guard, avoiding the guard, body tenseness, drug intoxication and alcohol intoxication. A control condition was also included, in which the images were not accompanied by any description. Participants then provided a rating of the man's likelihood to engage in violence (from 1 [extremely unlikely] to 7 [extremely

likely]). Additionally, participants were required to answer whether they would allow this person into a bar or pub (Yes or No). Images were obtained from the Florida Department of Corrections offender database, and all offenders selected had been convicted of only a violent (murder or assault) or non-violent (fraud or counterfeiting) crime.

MY FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

I found that compared to the control group, all cues except for Middle Eastern appearance were rated as more likely to act aggressively. Specifically, when the man was described as intoxicated, having tattoos, searching for or avoiding the security guard, or showing physical signs of tenseness, participants rated these men as having a relatively greater propensity for aggression. There was also some evidence that the cues of alcohol intoxication, avoiding the security guard and having tattoos may increase perceptions of aggression for violent offenders to a greater extent than non-violent offenders. By contrast, men of Middle Eastern appearance were rated as having a lower propensity for aggression.

Although much more research is needed, these findings have implications for the way in which security personnel permit or deny entry to people in bar settings. Based on these findings, it could be suggested that utilizing certain cues may bias our natural ability to judge an individual's level of aggression. Specifically, using information regarding a patron's level of alcohol intoxication, and avoidance of the guard and having tattoos, may help to increase the accuracy of aggressivity judgements; whereas using information regarding a patron's level of drug intoxication, body tenseness and how much they were searching for the guard may decrease the accuracy of aggressivity judgements.

MY JOURNEY

Following my Masters degree, I am now working as a Clinical Psychologist Registrar in Sydney, Australia in two roles: private practice and group facilitation in a hospital setting. Working in these roles has been incredibly rewarding, and allows me to remain up to date with psychology research. I have found that learning about human behaviour through my studies and research has provided an instrumental foundation for me as I move into clinical work.

Undertaking my Masters degree research has given me an immense amount of respect for researchers. Conducting research can be a stressful endeavour that requires a lot of commitment. Through this, I definitely learnt a lot about the research area, and about my ability to manage different tasks in an effective and timely manner.

MY ADVICE

My advice for anyone conducting research is to start collecting data early, once you have settled on a research topic. This will give you time to deal with any unexpected or last minute stressors. I also found that new ideas developed over time as I became more familiar with the research area and immersed myself in the writing process. It also definitely helps to study a topic area that you're interested in, with a supervisor who will be able to guide you in the right direction (and provide some reassurance when the stress hits!).

'TOO HALAL FOR HARAM PEOPLE AND TOO HARAM FOR HALAL PEOPLE': AN IPA STUDY ON THE LIVED IDENTITY OF YOUNG BRITISH MUSLIM WOMEN

Megan Hunt studied at Canterbury Christ Church University, UK. Her final year undergraduate project was supervised by Dr Anke Franz and she went on to complete a Masters research project supervised by Dr Dennis Nigbur. Her undergraduate project aimed to explore the lived experiences of British Muslim women regarding biculturalism, the impact of discrimination and the positive aspects of life as a British Muslim woman.

MY TOPIC AND AIMS

My main aim was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of British Muslim women with reference to the literature around issues they face. Underneath that large umbrella aim, I wanted to explore how British Muslim women make sense of their dual identity, the positive and negative aspects of their interactions with Muslims and non-Muslims, and their connection to Britain and their family's heritage culture.

My interest in the topic came from the media attention at the time on Muslim cultures in Britain and the struggles I saw friends of mine experiencing. I wanted to contribute, in some way, to a changing narrative concerning this group. I also knew that I wanted to complete a qualitative piece of research and the combination of these two interests filled a gap in the literature on British Muslims: biculturalism and identity.

MY METHODS

Participants (five British-Muslim women from Kent) took part in one-to-one, semi-structured interviews which allowed the subjects of interest to be explored as well as the expansion of relevant and interesting responses. Interviews lasted from 15 to 45 minutes. The interview schedule included questions on the topics of religion and identity, experiences of being a British Muslim and connectedness to heritage culture and Britain. Interviews were recorded using a dictaphone and were subsequently transcribed verbatim.

Interviews were subjected to an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This meant that the transcripts were read multiple times and coded to identify emergent themes. These emergent themes were then categorized to form superordinate themes that were common across participants. This is a very time-consuming process, but enabled me to really understand my participants and their narratives. This form of analysis places the participants' experiences at the centre of the research. In this process I had to bring an awareness of my own influences to my interpretation of the interviews and understand that it may not be exactly what the participant meant.

MY FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

The participants' experiences were characterized by three superordinate themes:

1. The first theme was dual identity, which depicted the participants' feelings of being bicultural through their feelings of not fitting in, the uniqueness of their identity, the differences they saw between the views of Muslims and British Muslims, and their segregation from the Muslim community.
2. The second theme was negativity in interactions constructed from the subthemes of negativity from non-Muslims, negativity from Muslims and negativity in the media.
3. The third theme was positivity through education. In this theme, participants shared their enjoyment of educating not only themselves about the Muslim faith but also other people. The theme comprised two subthemes: education of the self and education of others.

The results of the research have implications for how society constructs the narrative around Muslim identities, serving as evidence to reject certain stereotypes. They also highlight the necessity of tackling discrimination in both British and Muslim communities and encourage the need for education and intimacy to be included in intergroup contact for this group.

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As a result of completing my undergraduate project successfully, my supervisor approached me to consider editing my work into a publishable manuscript. We are now submitting to various journals in the hope of achieving a publication, something I hadn't even considered at the start of the project.

MY JOURNEY

The biggest lesson I took from my undergraduate project was just how intense and time-consuming a research project can be. I completely underestimated how long it would take me to analyse my interviews, but on the flipside also how much I would enjoy that process. It also taught me that sometimes your results may not be what you were expecting, but that they can still be hugely useful in informing future work.

In a practical sense, this project hugely enhanced my time- and project-management skills as well as my organizational abilities. The foundations of research that I learnt through this project were extremely helpful when it came to completing my Masters project, particularly when I undertook IPA for a second time and when setting myself deadlines.

I now work as a School and College Engagement officer for widening participation activities that focus on STEM learning. My own background in STEM and research help me to share the rewards of a science-based career with the groups I work with who traditionally have not tended to pick a route involving higher education. I also continue to work on research projects in my role, so understanding the process, deadlines and research ethics significantly enhances the work we create.

MY ADVICE

Firstly, make sure you are passionate about your topic. This is your chance to really get under the skin of something you are interested in, so grab it with both hands. Secondly, don't panic if your results don't follow your expectations or aren't significant. What is most important is your ability to talk about your results and evaluate your own work. Be organized, ask as many questions as you can and enjoy the process.

HOW DO IMAGES IN THE MEDIA INFLUENCE WOMEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR APPEARANCE?

Mollie Dale is studying her undergraduate degree in Psychology, and doing her third year research project at Aberystwyth University, UK, supervised by Dr Gareth Hall. Mollie's research project explores the influence of photoshopped images of women in the media on women's body esteem and attitudes towards their own appearance.

MY TOPIC AND AIMS

My research examined whether the introduction of health warning labels on digitally altered images of women could improve body esteem in young women. In the past, health warning labels have most typically targeted tobacco consumption by cigarette smokers. Over time, we have also seen warnings related to food consumption, such as traffic light labelling of calories, sugar and fat content in various food and drink products. More recently, and in response to a disproportionate volume of clinically diagnosed underweight women in France, the French government in 2017 passed a law requiring photoshopped images of models to carry a warning label. It is believed that exposure to images of supermodels in adverts is an important source of body esteem anxiety that can then contribute in the development of health impairing behaviours (e.g. eating disorders).

While there is a wealth of literature about the impact of exposure to thin models on young women's body esteem, my study aimed to examine whether, over a short time frame and under experimental conditions, the introduction of health warning labels on images of supermodels mitigates any reduction in self-reported body esteem in participants. If simple health warnings can mitigate the impact of regular exposure to such images, then I hope this information might be useful to advertisers who feel that health warnings could damage their product image. However, being seen to promote body positive messages could improve brand image amongst their target market (as in the recent men's Lynx deodorant 'find your magic' campaign in Australia), rather than via manipulated images of ideal female bodies.

GOODSHOOT

Given that eating disorders and body image anxieties are pressing social issues in young Western women, working on producing evidence for such an important issue was an important motivation for me in thinking about the application and relevance of social psychology to everyday life, but also government interventions.

MY METHODS

My study used an online pre and post-test method via Bristol Online Survey subscription. A sample of 161 women was recruited from two universities, one in Wales and the other in England. Participants were required to provide a baseline measure of body esteem using the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4), and the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (CSW). One week later (to reduce the likelihood of participants guessing the aims of the study), participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions where they were asked to view and rate images of models found in popular women's interest magazines (e.g., *Cosmopolitan*). In condition 1, participants saw images of models, while in condition 2, participants saw the same images, but they were accompanied by a health warning stating that the images had been modified. Those in condition 3 were my control group, where participants saw images of non-human objects, such as landscapes and adverts for technology. All images of models were piloted and pre-rated by other students as fitting ideal cultural representations of the female body (time 1). After viewing the images, participants completed the SATAQ-4 and CSW Scale again (time 2).

MY FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

The main results of my study were non-significant, suggesting that health warnings used to accompany computer-edited media images had no significant impact on the body esteem scores of participants. However, it was important to recognize that my sample had relatively high body esteem before the study took place, implying that they may not be influenced by health warnings in the same way that those with already low body esteem or even clinical populations (e.g., those living with anorexia and bulimia) would be. Future research could, therefore, go on to examine whether health warnings have a significant impact on a clinical population, which would provide significant applications for clinical psychology.

MY JOURNEY

Although my research did not find any significant effect of health warnings, my project taught me how prevalent photoshopping within the media can be, but also the negative impact it can have on the mental and physical health of those potentially at risk of developing symptoms of eating disorders. Overall, conducting the research increased my own self-confidence in terms of being able to present and develop my own ideas to create a manageable, topical, and interesting project and I will be presenting my work at the forthcoming BPS Welsh Branch Student conference at Aberystwyth University.

After university, I plan to pursue a career in the police, with a particular interest in gathering intelligence. Although my project isn't directly related to this, I have always been interested in intelligence and policing, and the skills I have gained through the completion of my project, such as presentation, research and data handling, will undeniably help me in my future career plans.

MY ADVICE

My advice to other students would be to start early and allow yourself enough time to complete everything. That way you have time to go back and change things to reach a standard that both you and your supervisor are happy with. Begin by collecting journal articles throughout the year that may be relevant to your topic, so that when you come to write it up, you already have a lot of information and references to use, but more importantly a good grounding and understanding of the literature and field. Also, I would suggest picking a topic area you are interested in, as this makes the research element, and the writing up, much more enjoyable.

CAN WE GET MORE ACTIVE IN THE WORKPLACE? STANDING IN MEETINGS

Molly Rasch studied a Health Psychology MSc at University College London, UK. Her dissertation was supervised by Dr Lee Smith (Anglia Ruskin University), Professor Louise Mansfield (Brunel University) and Dr Benjamin Gardner (King's College London).

MY TOPIC AND AIMS

As an active person, I have always found it hard to sit still for long periods of time and hated the idea of an office job. This is why I chose to get involved in a project that focused on getting more active at work, something that I feel really passionate about. In the UK, figures suggest that 72 per cent of women and 60 per cent of men fail to meet physical activity guidelines, with nearly half of adults reporting to never do any form of physical activity (British Heart Foundation, 2015). A key factor likely to be driving this is the sharp reduction in manual jobs, and the changed nature of today's workplace. Since 1950, there has been an 83 per cent rise in the number of sedentary jobs (American Heart Association, 2015) and studies have shown that office-based workers spend approximately 10–11 hours of a working day seated (Smith et al., 2015). Research also suggests that sedentary behaviour is associated with a host of adverse health effects, including type 2 diabetes, obesity and high blood pressure.

I was interested in exploring a relatively cost-effective and simple behavioural intervention – standing in meetings – in the context of people becoming more active in the workplace. Research has shown that even a marginal increase in activity levels can have positive effects on health. Little was known, however, about how people experience standing in meetings. The main focus of my research was to gain a deeper understanding of how participants, chosen from a population of white-collar, desk-based workers, responded to being encouraged to stand in meetings.

MY METHODS

My research used a qualitative design, comprising 21 in-depth, semi-structured interviews. A total of eight participants completed three interviews each. A qualitative research methodology was appropriate as it enabled us to gain insight into a largely unknown area, and a rich description of participants' subjective experiences. Participants' responses were analysed qualitatively using Framework Analysis (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003), an approach which aims to develop themes and capture relationships in the data in order to develop explanatory conclusions and accounts. Framework Analysis uses a matrix-based approach to synthesizing data and thus enables questions or issues identified in advance to be systematically considered in the analysis whilst still maintaining enough flexibility to incorporate patterns or themes that emerge in the interviews.

MY FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

The study revealed that participants engaged with the concept of standing in the workplace to promote health. They perceived and experienced benefits (such as increased attention and productivity, and more efficient note-taking!) and wanted the idea to be encouraged more generally at work. However, it was strongly felt that there were also problems, such as a feeling of being socially removed from the group, an uncomfortable state of being overly self-conscious, and physical tiredness. Certain factors, such as the type of meeting, the inappropriate design of the physical environment and the surrounding workplace culture of sitting, meant that standing was experienced as an abnormal activity. In the majority of instances, participants felt they had to 'explain themselves' or apologize for 'being the awkward one'.

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In sum, people were motivated to try standing at work but it was fundamentally felt that there needed to be a huge culture change for the idea to become normalized. Applying these findings to the bigger picture, I felt that standing was unlikely to catch on without a wider cultural shift, because individuals are typically reluctant to make themselves stand out. My results tell us that people are motivated to try a more active way of working, though, which is an encouraging discovery. A real highlight has been having this work published in the journal *PLoS ONE*. The *Daily Mail Online* also ran a piece about the research shortly afterwards.

MY JOURNEY

I have learnt skills that are really useful, both in academia and the world of work more generally – in particular, the ability to break down a project and allocate enough time for the different components. The qualitative interview approach gave me great experience in dealing with participants: from discussing the project initially, going through the consent with them, observing them in their meetings, and, finally, interviewing them. It was great fun! I also learnt how to work remotely in a team, as my team-members were based at different institutions and we relied on email to keep in contact. This experience has helped me in my subsequent career in speech and language therapy, in which I spend a lot of time talking with clients, really trying to understand them and their lives. I have learnt a lot from carrying out qualitative research about how different sorts of questions will yield different kinds of answers. The process of interviewing taught me that your interview, or dialogue with a client/participant, is only as good as your questions! Drawing on my insights into the process of how we use language, I can get the most out of people who struggle with communication. My project has also equipped me with research skills which will undoubtedly help me as I go on to further study doing a Masters course in Speech and Language Therapy.

MY ADVICE

My most important piece of advice is to ensure that you are genuinely interested in your topic. That way, all that reading and researching won't feel so laborious! It's also important to immerse yourself in the literature and your own data and get to know your subject area inside out. Ideas can jump out at you after you've been away from your work for a while, so give yourself enough time to take breaks and evaluate your work. Having a good relationship with your colleagues is obviously really important, too. I was extremely lucky to have a superb team of supervisors

behind me, and I am ever grateful to them for all their help. Of course, being organized is key. I had heaps of pages of transcripts, so I bought special folders and notebooks (I'm a secret stationery geek) to motivate myself to be organized. Use calendars to mark in deadlines. Don't be too ambitious in terms of how many participants you can recruit and the scale of your study. Finally, don't go overboard and burn yourself out. Keep breaking up sessions of work with whatever keeps you sane – for me, it's being active (funnily enough!).

SEXISM AND LIFE SATISFACTION IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Nina Waddell studied as an undergraduate student at The University of Auckland, New Zealand. Her final-year thesis, which explores how sexism affects people's life satisfaction, was supervised by Dr Danny Osborne.

MY TOPIC AND AIMS

I think that it is important to explore and understand sexist attitudes (and indeed all forms of inequity) because identifying how they operate is key to changing them. Whilst our intimate relationships are arguably one of the most central and significant parts of our lives, research examining how sexism affects processes in our relationships is still emerging (see Hammond & Overall, 2016 for an overview). Therefore, I feel that it is a valuable and relevant topic, and one that I also find personally interesting.

My research investigated how sexism affects the boosts to life satisfaction that people derive from being in an intimate relationship (Waddell, Sibley & Osborne, 2018). I assessed potential differences in the strength of the association between relationship status and life satisfaction as a function of hostile and benevolent sexism. These two forms of sexism represent the sub-components of ambivalent sexism, a theoretical framework which posits that sexism consists of overtly negative views of women who are seen as power-hungry and manipulative (i.e., hostile sexism), and subjectively positive views of women who are seen as pure and warm, albeit incompetent (i.e., benevolent sexism; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Because hostile sexism portrays women in unflattering terms, I theorized that it would attenuate the boosts to life satisfaction people derive from being in an intimate relationship. Conversely, the subjectively positive tone of benevolent sexism that views men as 'incomplete' without the love of women should enhance the benefits people receive from their relationships.

MY METHODS

I used quantitative data from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (NZAVS), a nationally representative, 20-year longitudinal panel study that began in 2009. Each year participants complete a survey that asks questions related to politics, inequality, current affairs and more. I used the fifth wave of data, which included around 14,000 participants who provided partial or complete responses to my variables of interest: relationship status, ambivalent sexism and life satisfaction.

To test my predictions, I analysed the above variables within a multiple regression framework. I analysed the main effects of both relationship status and ambivalent sexism on life satisfaction, as well as the possibility that hostile and benevolent sexism *moderate* the association between relationship status and life satisfaction.

MY FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

As hypothesized, those in an intimate relationship had higher levels of life satisfaction than those who were single. But, critically, the positive association between relationship status and life satisfaction varied by participants' levels of sexism. Whereas benevolent sexism *strengthened* this association (Figure 1), hostile sexism *weakened* it (Figure 2).

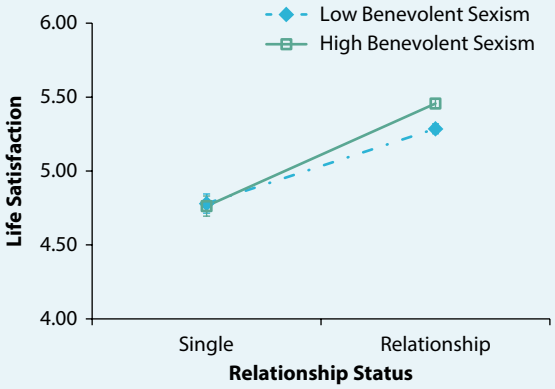

FIGURE 1 Relationship between relationship status and life satisfaction as a function of benevolent sexism Results are adjusted for all covariates and relevant two-way interactions.

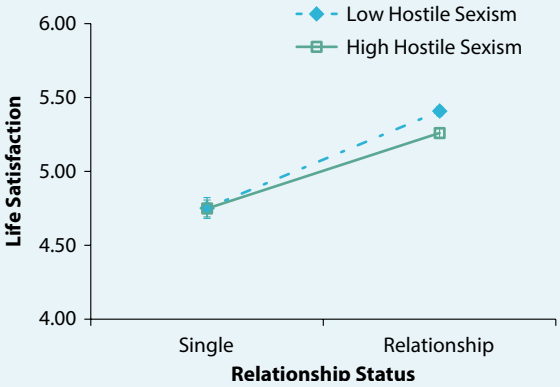

FIGURE 2 Relationship between relationship status and life satisfaction as a function of hostile sexism Results are adjusted for all covariates and relevant two-way interactions.

Notably, gender did *not* moderate these hypothesized associations, suggesting that the benefits and drawbacks to benevolent and hostile sexism (respectively) operate similarly for men and women. These findings support and extend existing knowledge about ambivalent sexism. Benevolent sexism asserts that men and women are 'naturally complementary' and that heterosexual relationships are necessary to living a 'complete' life. As such, those who endorse this ideology should feel particularly satisfied when they are in a relationship. Conversely, those who endorse hostile sexism tend to view relationships as a battle for power and control. Thus, hostile sexism is generally associated with poorer relationship outcomes overall, and this is also likely to reduce the happiness that people derive from their relationships. By demonstrating that there are potential relational benefits to benevolent sexism, my findings help to explain why some people may endorse sexist ideologies. This is especially pertinent to women, for whom endorsing sexism seems contrary to group and self-interests.

I submitted this research to *Sex Roles*, a multidisciplinary journal focused on gender issues, and the paper was accepted and published. It was a rewarding experience to see my first publication! I also had the opportunity to present this research at the conference of the Society of Australasian Social Psychologists. Whilst nerve-wracking, I greatly enjoyed the process of receiving feedback on my work from researchers in the field, as well as listening to the other interesting and diverse studies presented at the conference.

MY JOURNEY

Since finishing my undergraduate thesis, I have gone on to complete my Honours degree in psychology at the University of Auckland. I hope to also publish my Honours dissertation which investigated different theoretical approaches to examining the experiences of those with multiple intersecting disadvantaged identities (e.g., women who are ethnic minorities). Then I will begin my PhD in psychology – more research! – examining sexism in the context of

intimate relationships and expand on this topic by investigating how sexism affects what people do outside of relationships as well. This is a new and exciting direction that I am greatly looking forward to pursuing.

My undergraduate research project prepared me well for graduate study. I learned to balance my priorities, harness my writing skills and practise working independently. It also gave me real-life experiences of what research is like and built my passion for it.

MY ADVICE

Seek out opportunities! Try to spend time with different people in various fields to build a sense of what you're interested in, and to make connections. Make sure you find something that really interests you. Research is hard work, and your motivation may ebb and flow. Being truly enthusiastic about *what* you're researching will help with the lulls. Lastly, don't be afraid to ask for help! This one was hugely important for me. Research projects can be challenging, and there will be much that you don't know, but it's a collaborative process, and your supervisors, other researchers *and* other students are all great sources of feedback, ideas and support. And be sure to enjoy the ride!

THE EFFECT OF SPECIESISM AND PERSONALIZATION ON PERCEPTIONS OF DOG AND PIG VICTIMS

Sarah Gradidge studied an MSc in Research Methods in Psychology at Anglia Ruskin University, UK. Her research project was supervised by Dr Annelie Harvey, and focused on the existence of speciesist attitudes in perceptions of dog and pig victims (in this case, victims of kidnapping), and how personalization of animal victims (e.g., providing them with a name) influences people's perceptions of them. Sarah also has a BSc in Psychology from Anglia Ruskin University and won the Anglia Ruskin University BPS Undergraduate Award in 2017.

MY TOPIC AND AIMS

For my MSc project, I wished to investigate two research questions:

- How does the species of an animal victim (specifically, a pig versus a dog) influence perceptions of them?
- How does personalization (whereby personalized animals are given a name and referred to as 'she and 'her', and non-personalized animals are not given a name and referred to as 'it') influence the perception of animal victims?

These research questions are of utmost importance, as the area of victimology (the study of how people perceive and react to victims) has largely overlooked animal victims (Vollum, Buffington-Vollum & Longmire, 2004). Furthermore, speciesism (a form of prejudice similar to sexism and racism whereby people are prejudiced against certain animals, and prejudiced towards others, due to an animal's species categorization alone) has received relatively little research interest, and yet potentially has large implications for the lives and welfare of certain animals. For example, 'profit' animals (such as pigs) may be subject to moral disengagement, allowing behaviour against them that would not be deemed acceptable against animals where there is less or no moral disengagement (e.g., 'pet' animals such as dogs) (see Bandura, 1999; Bastian, Loughnan, Haslam & Radke, 2012).

MY METHODS

To investigate the above research questions, I created a fictional news excerpt describing an animal that had been a victim of kidnapping. This news excerpt randomly differed in whether it referred to a dog or a pig victim, and whether the animal victim was personalized (called 'Bella' and referred to as 'she') or non-personalized (given no name and referred to as 'it'). Participants were therefore randomly assigned to one of four possible conditions (dog personalized, dog non-personalized, pig personalized or pig non-personalized) and instructed to carefully read their randomly assigned news excerpt. Participants were then subsequently asked to answer five

scales regarding their feelings after reading the excerpt, measuring empathy, willingness to help, victim blaming (attribution of responsibility to a victim for somehow causing the crime against them), victim derogation (the detraction of positive traits from a victim) and second-hand forgiveness (forgiveness of the perpetrator of a crime). I measured these dependent variables because victim characteristics, including characteristics of animal victims, have previously been found to affect these variables (e.g., Signal, Taylor & Maclean, 2018). I predicted that dog (vs. pig) victims and personalized (vs. non-personalized) animal victims would be viewed with greater empathy and greater willingness to help, and less victim blaming, less victim derogation and less second-hand forgiveness.

MY FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

I did not find support for my hypothesis that personalized animals would be viewed more favourably than non-personalized animals – that is, statistically, participants' perceptions (in terms of empathy, willingness to help, victim blaming, victim derogation and second-hand forgiveness) of both personalized and non-personalized animals did not differ significantly. This result highlights how experimental research, particularly in under researched areas such as this one, does not always support hypotheses. I did, however, find support for my hypothesis concerning the existence of speciesist attitudes: that is, dog victims (on the whole) were viewed more favourably than pig victims. Dog victims were viewed with more empathy and willingness to help, and less victim derogation and second-hand forgiveness. Perceptions of dog and pig victims did *not* differ in terms of victim blaming. This is likely due to people's tendency to evaluate (non-human) animals (in this case, a dog or pig) as incapable of being moral agents (Gray, Gray & Wegner, 2007). 'Moral agent', in this context, refers to a being that is perceived as being capable of *intentionally* causing others to be happy and/or to suffer.

Robert-Owen-Wahl/Pixabay

MY JOURNEY

This project was my first research exploration into perceptions of animals, and, as such, enabled me to become familiar with the current literature and gain an in-depth understanding of this research area. This is extremely important to me, as, having found evidence suggesting that speciesism exists, I wish to continue this research to PhD level. Specifically, I hope to investigate if speciesism occurs in different contexts, the causes of speciesism, and potential interventions to overcome speciesism.

My MSc project also allowed me to further develop my research skills with real-world data. This is highly important, as there are skills essential to conducting research that are often best learnt through conducting real-world research. These include the potential difficulties of recruiting participants, the (sometimes messy) nature of real-world data (e.g., incomplete data) and the need for creativity (e.g., when designing research stimuli or creating complex research designs).

MY ADVICE

I would always advise that, at whichever level and subject, you conduct research into an area that intrigues you. What have you always wondered? In terms of psychology specifically, perhaps there are phenomena that you have witnessed in your own behaviour or in the behaviour of others, and you wish to understand why they occur. If you are unable to find answers in the current literature, then you may have a viable research question!

ARE FEMINISTS CONSPIRING AGAINST US? THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENDORSEMENT OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND RAPE MYTHS

Tanya Schrader studied as an undergraduate student at Staffordshire University, UK, supervised by Dr Daniel Jolley. Tanya's final year project explored how belief in conspiracy theories about feminism is related to rape myth acceptance.

MY TOPIC AND AIMS

In the UK, rape is thought to be the most underreported crime with the lowest conviction rates in Europe (Hohl & Stanko, 2015). This deficit is believed to be influenced by rape myth acceptance (RMA) which can be understood as biased or prejudiced beliefs about rape, rape victims and perpetrators of rape. It is therefore important to investigate the factors contributing to RMA.

It is plausible that alongside known predicters of RMA such as sexism, belief in conspiracy theories (e.g., that feminists are involved in secret plots and schemes) may play a unique role in predicting RMA. Conspiracy theories are defined as alternative explanations of significant events as the secret acts of powerful, malevolent groups (e.g., Uscinski & Parent, 2014), and have been associated with negative social behaviours such as reduced intentions towards vaccination and eco-friendly behaviours (Jolley & Douglas, 2014a, 2014b), as well as increased intergroup prejudice (Bilewicz, Winiewski, Kofta & Wojcik, 2013). Conspiracy theories may be endorsed when cherished beliefs are under threat from compelling evidence to the contrary (Lewandowsky, Oberauer & Gignac, 2013). Such cherished beliefs may relate to sexism (e.g., beliefs in traditional gender roles), which have been associated with rape myths. Feminists, who oppose sexism, actively seek to change institutional laws and policies which perpetuate traditional gender norms. Therefore, feminists may be perceived as threatening traditional gender norms and conspiring to manipulate society according to their standpoint. This study sought to investigate if conspiracy theories, particularly about feminists, contribute to the continued acceptance of rape myths within society.

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In response to the Me Too campaign, I was taken aback by the extent of victim-blaming attitudes and opinions which were aired on social and traditional media and expressed by both men and women. I think it is important that research responds to the awareness raised by Me Too, especially when considering how biased beliefs may undermine the criminal justice system, relating to sexual violence.

MY METHODS

A correlational design was employed, and 200 participants were recruited. Participants completed an online survey comprising scales measuring conspiracy belief (e.g., '*The government manipulates, fabricates or suppresses evidence in order to deceive the public*'), belief in feminist conspiracy theories (e.g., '*Feminists are involved in plots and schemes*'), benevolent sexism (e.g., '*Women should be cherished and protected by men*'), hostile sexism (e.g., '*Women seek to gain power by getting control over men*'), and RMA (e.g., '*If a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of hand*'). These measures were presented in random order with participants indicating their agreement on a seven-point scale. Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to examine whether belief in conspiracy theories about feminists was a significant predictor of RMA.

MY FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

Results revealed that conspiracy theories about feminists played a unique role in predicting RMA, alongside other known predictors (e.g., sexism). There are serious effects associated with people holding rape myths, including increased rape proclivity (Taschler & West, 2017) and secondary victimization of rape victims within the criminal justice system (Hackett, Day & Mohr, 2008). Reduction of RMA is important to reducing sexual violence against women (e.g., Stoll, Lilley & Pinter, 2017). This research uncovers the role that conspiracy beliefs may play in predicting RMA, and thus highlights the value in developing interventions to combat conspiracy theories, as these interventions may aid the reduction of RMA.

There may also be implications when considering jury decision making. A systematic review found that jurors' RMA influenced decision making (Dinos, Burrowes, Hammond & Cunliffe, 2015). In particular, the review concluded that findings across all studies converged in jurors being more likely to vote against the guilt of defendants if they held stereotypical views on rape. These reviews demonstrate the impact of RMA on the delivery of justice, which may be exacerbated by conspiracy theories about rape victims. The current research has highlighted the role that conspiracy theories may play in a new area and calls for future research to examine the impact of conspiracy beliefs on sexual violence.

MY JOURNEY

I started my undergraduate forensic psychology course with the view to working in the criminal justice system and did not intend to continue to postgraduate study. However, after discovering my love of research, my plans changed. This is partly due to the experience conducting my project. I felt that my results had real-world value, sentiments which were echoed by those who attended my presentation at the 2018 BPS Midlands conference. I knew that this project was just the beginning of my work and I am now undertaking a PhD exploring the darker outcomes of conspiracy theories relating to the unfair treatment – increased aggression, justification of violence and experiences within the criminal justice system – of people who belong to groups that are perceived to be involved in conspiracies.

MY ADVICE

Get organized early. I recommend creating the Word document for your project and adding some text (a few bullet points, your headings or even getting started on your introduction) as this offers you focus. Most importantly, make sure your project is something which you are enthusiastic about (it also helps if your supervisor shares your enthusiasm, which mine did). A large chunk of your final year will revolve around your project so make sure the material doesn't bore or overwhelm you. This is your chance to demonstrate your abilities and your passion, so make it count.

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